

VOYAGES SF

MERC: 2000™
AN OBVIOUS AND CURRENT MENACE

2300 AD™
BUNKER HILL CLASS CRUISER

CYBERPUNK FICTION
LINKUP

REVIEW
DARK CONSPIRACY™



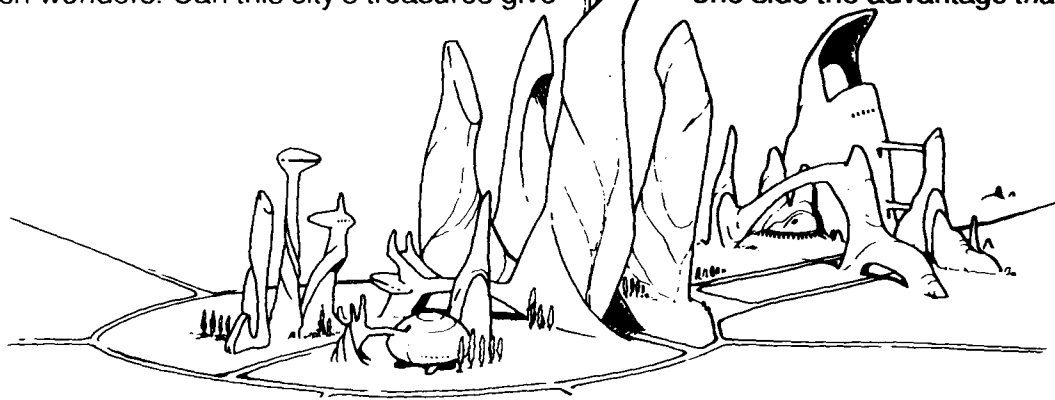
KNIGHTFALL

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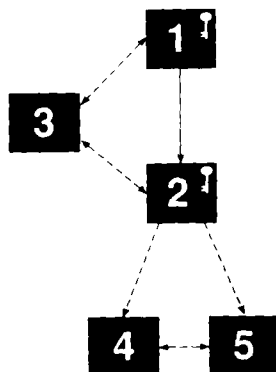
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WELCOME ABOARD

I would like to take this opportunity to
encourage our readers to consider expanding
their hobby to include actually writing for the
games they are familiar with. If you have *any*
writing talent and aren't doing this, you're
missing out on a rewarding part of the hobby.
Though the monetary reward is not great, a
byline, self satisfaction, and the admiration of
your fellow gamers for a job well done are fair
rewards in themselves. Narrowing the subject
to our own particular needs, we at **Voyages
SF** are always looking to attract the work of
gamers wanting to expand into writing for their
hobby, particularly because one can be
familiar enough to write for only so many
games. The list of popular games is quite
extensive—and varied. So what would we like
to see in submissions?

Well, cyberpunk is still quite popular, at least
in the game industry. I would prefer **Shadow-
run** pieces in this genre.

Horror is experiencing a major upsurge in
interest. Pieces for **Call of Cthulu**, **Chill**,
Dark Conspiracy, **GURPS Horror**, and
Vampire are all quite welcome.

I would like to see more contemporary pieces
as well: **Mercenaries**, **Spies**, & **Private
Eyes**, **Daner International**, **Top Secret/
SI**, and **James Bond 007** come to mind.

We'll even consider submissions for
superhero games (I'll include **Ghostbusters**
in this grouping—the fit is as good as it gets).

And, of course, there are a plethora of more
mainstream science fiction games that you are
used to seeing coverage for in our magazine.

But this coverage can be expanded to include
more games as well.

Hey! Let's see that submission!

— James B. King

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Graphics & Illustration.....	3.0
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Q1: Is this issue better than, as good as, or
not as good as our last issue? 60%-not as
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Q2: Including yourself, how many people read
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The Adjutant

MegaTraveller: Wheeled Service & Support Vehicles, \$4.95, May
Infantry Weapons, \$4.95, Jul
Wheeled Combat Vehicles, \$4.95, Jul

B.T.R.C.

Timelords: Supertanker of Death, \$6.95 (Sep)
CORPS: Technology 1991, \$5.95, Jun

Chameleon Eclectic Enter.

Millennium's End RPG, \$14.95, Jun
Nightwalker, \$11.95 (Sep)
Chaosium
Call of Cthulhu: Kingsport, \$18.95 (Aug)

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MegaTraveller Alien Vol. 2: Solomani & Asian: The second book in DGP's rewritten and expanded coverage of the major alien races. Interior art: Mike Vilardi, Blair Reynolds, Rob Caswell, and William Jordan. Cover: Dell Harris. 104 pgs. \$12.95 (August).

Onnesium Quest: The Antares Campaign Sourcebook: Similar to *Flaming Eye*, this adventure/sourcebook brings your players across the Antares region on a quest for the ultimate treasure. Cover: A.C. Farley. 104 pgs. \$12.95 (late '91).

MegaTraveller Journal No. 3: Now almost twice the size! This issue features a new cruiser, details on megacorps in the Rebellion Era, and much more. 104 pgs. \$12.95 (late '91).

The Best of the Travelers' Digest: This compendium of the best articles from DGP's premier Traveller magazine includes the collected Psionics Knights campaign (re-edited for MegaTraveller), the Complete Rebel Reporter (with new faction info), as well as some new material. 104 pgs. \$12.95 (late '91).

A.I. - Role Playing in a Technofantastic Age: Nanotechnology, artificial intelligence, and genetic engineering all combine to produce one of the freshest new gaming back-grounds on the market. "Not technology and magic, but technology as magic!" Cover and interiors: Mike Vilardi (Oct).

FASA

Mechwarrior 2nd Ed., \$15, ?
Renegade Legion 2nd Ed., \$25 (Aug)
Frost Death, \$4.95 (Sep)
Distant Fire, \$8, Jun
Prefect, \$25, ?
BattleTech: Way of the Clans (novel), \$4.50 (Aug)
Reinforcements Rcrds, \$8, ?
Lost Destiny (novel), \$4.50, ?
Blood Name (novel), \$3.99, ?
Solaris VII (boxed), \$25, ?
Battleforce (reprint), \$25 (Sep)
Lethal Heritage (novel reprint), \$4.95 (Sep)
Wolf Clan Srcbk, \$15, Jul
Shadowrun: London Srcbk, \$15, ?
Native America Nations, Vol.1, \$12, Jul
Native America Nations, Vol.2, \$12 (Sep)

GDW

Dark Conspiracy RPG, \$22, Jul
A Gathering Evil, \$4.95, Jul
Heart of Darkness, \$12 (Aug)
Darktek Equipment Guide, \$12 (Sep)
New Orleans, \$10, ?
MegaTraveller: Hard Times, \$12 (Sep)
Merc 2000: Nautical & Aviation Handbook, \$18, ?

Games Workshop

Space Marines 2nd ed, \$55, ?
Spacefleet, \$24.95, Jun
Ultra Marine, \$24.95 (Sep)

Hero Games

Champions: Road Kill, \$7, Apr
Classic Organizations, \$16, ?
European Enemies, \$13, ?
Champions Presents #1, \$14 (Sep)

Iron Crown Ent.

Metal Express: Black Guard, \$8, Jun
SpaceMaster: Aliens & Artifacts, \$14, ?
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Mayfair Games

Cosmic Encounter, \$35, ?

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Vampires Srcbk, \$12, Apr
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Apparitions, \$12, ?

Palladium Books

Rifts World Book One: Vampire Kingdoms: 176 pgs. \$14.95. **Highlights:** The Vampire as an optional player character. New Techno-Wizard devices for slaying vampires. Villains & Monsters. Mayan gods, demons, & temple ruins. Mystery of the Yucatan Peninsula. Dual dimensions co-existing in the same location. Reid's Rangers - Vampire Hunters. Juarez City - a place of evil and decadence (mapped). Art by Timothy Truman, Kevin Long, & Kevin Siembieda.

Rifts Conversion Book: 200+ pgs. \$19.95, October. By Kevin Siembieda. Art will include Kevin Long, Thomas Miller, Michael Gustovich. Conversions will include magic items, various O.C.C.s, adult dragons, monsters, demons, faerie folk, and gods.

Rifts World Book Two: Atlantis: scheduled for early 1992.

New Generation (video) Vol. 6 (Aug)
New Generation Vol. 7 (Sep)
New Generation Vol. 8, \$39.95 (Oct). Volume 8 contains the last four, and seldom seen, episodes of the Invid Invasion/Mospeada/New Generation.

Southern Cross: Vol 1 (3 episodes), \$29.95 (Oct)

Villains Unlimited: This book for Heroes Unlimited will be 160 to 200 pages and will contain over 40 villains, secret organizations, new super-powers, and adventures. By Kevin Siembieda and Kevin Long. Cover: James Steranko. (Nov)

Rapport Games

Morpheus: Dreams of Steel, \$12, ?

R. Talsorian

Modern Weapons: Manual of Modern Firearms, \$15 (Aug)
Cyberpunk: Corp Book I, \$10, ?
Night City Srcbk, \$18 (Aug)
EuroSourcebook, \$10, Jul



From Palladium Books' The Vampire Kingdoms

SGS

MegaTraveller: Lab Ship plans 2nd ed, \$12.95 (Aug)
ISS Express Messengers, \$11.95, ?
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Starchilde Pubns.

Justifiers: Cybermedtech Srcbk, \$8.95, Jul
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Steve Jackson

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PF11 Amerind Empire, \$12, ?

TSR

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Buck Rogers: Phases of the Moon, \$6.95 (Sep)
Luna Access, \$9.95, ?
Marvel Superheroes: Warlord of Baluur, \$6.95, ?
Spore of Athos, \$6.95 (Sep)

West End Games

Paranoia: Mad Mechs, \$10 (Aug)
Star Wars: Imperial Srcbk (reprint), \$20 (Sep)
Campaign Pack, \$12 (Sep)
General Craken's Rebel Field Guide, \$13, Jul
Torg: Land Below, \$15 (Aug)
Crucible of Pain, \$12 (Sep)
Orrorsh Srcbk, \$18, Jul
Kawana Personal Weapons Catalog, \$13, Jun
Operation Hard Sell, \$12, Jun

White Wolf

Vampire RPG, \$20, Jun
Ashes to Ashes, \$9.95, Jul
Storytellers Screen, \$7.95, ?
Chicago by Night, \$15 (Aug)
Blood Bond, \$8 (Sep)
Blood Nativity (Atlas Games) \$5 (Sep)

3W

Starforce Terra, \$28 (Sep)
Gulf Wars Historical Reference Book, \$9.95 (Sep)



MERC: 2000

AN **Obvious** AND **Current Menace**

G L E N A L L I S O N

Colombia

The *Republica de Colombia* is a small country located in the northwestern portion of South America. It is here that the Andes Mountains reach their northern terminus. Colombia lies almost entirely in the north tropical zone. The tropical heat of this area is modified by the higher elevations of the Andes and high wind action. The subtropical zone lies between 1,500 feet and 6,000 feet and is located usually on the slopes and valleys of the Andes. The temperate zone comprises the area 6,000 feet and 10,000 feet. Most of the important cities in Colombia are located between 3,000 feet and 9,000 feet above sea level.

The vegetation in the temperate zone is rich and varied. Forest products are a potential source of income that is only now being tapped. Up to 10,000 feet the palm tree is abundant. Toucans and hummingbirds are found everywhere. The tapir, peccary, and several types of deer are also found here, as well as the puma, jaguar, and the spectacled bear. There are plenty of turtles, lizards and snakes here also.

Colombia is a mixing of indians and whites, which has been going on for the last four centuries. From the time of the Conquistadores until the mid-19th century, the Roman Catholic faith was the only religion allowed in the country. Even today in the 21st century, 80% of Colombian citizens are Catholics. Many of the people living here are descendants of the Incas and other indian groups and still speak languages in addition to Spanish.

Starting in the 1970s and slowly building their business, the drug lords have gained in power. First growing and importing marijuana to the United States and then harvesting and processing the coca leaf into cocaine, these drug lords have slowly taken over the government in Colombia. The current president of Colombia, Francisco Escalera, just happens to be a first cousin to Esteban Jesus Montelongo, suspected to be the head of the drug cartel known as "Black 29." Although working behind the scene, Black 29 exerts a great deal of force to keep the Colombian government working for them.

There is no extradition of cartel members out of Colombia and, of course, members do not pay taxes. The Colombian army and police forces throughout the country go out of their way to avoid any possible confrontation with Black 29. Twenty years ago, several members of the cartel were prosecuted for various crimes. Immediately, a wave of car bombs and sniper assassinations swept the country. In one case, half of

the jury died within twelve hours as well as the two key witnesses for the prosecution. Naturally, nothing could be done but release the cartel members who then sued the government for false arrest.

The Current Situation

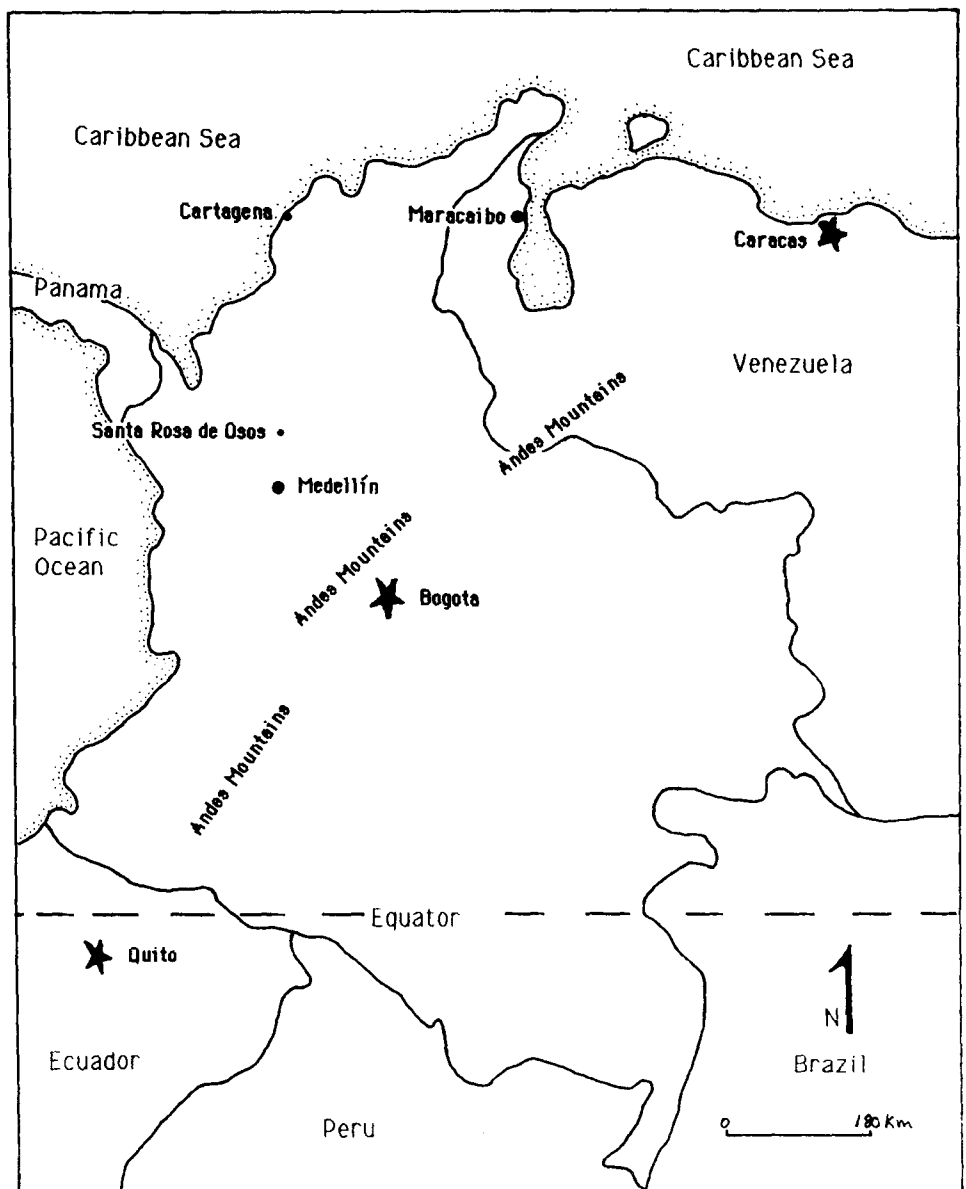
Through threats, fear, and applications of a great deal of money, Black 29 has become the foremost drug organization in Colombia. Currently, Esteban Jesus Montelongo is involved in activities in most of South America and has many business and political connections in the United States.

Three months ago, Black 29 worked out an alliance with six other criminal organizations working the drug trade. Cocaine and marijuana shipments to the United States and Europe have doubled. The ambassadors to Panama and Colombia have disappeared and a judge in New Orleans was gunned down in front of the federal

courthouse. Experts in the White House state that the situation will get worse unless the alliance is broken up. And these experts say that will happen when Montelongo and the other organization leaders are eliminated. Not only would the situation then return to normal, but drug traffic to the United States should be reduced.

Mission Briefing

Intelligence sources confirm that Esteban Montelongo is the mastermind behind the rise to power of Black 29 and is also the main force behind the criminal alliance. President Tanner has declared that this organization is "more dangerous than a rattle snake coiled to strike" and must be stopped. Unnamed sources indicate that Montelongo will be at his hilltop stronghold for the next six days and the decision has been made to go into Colombia and bring Montelongo out and to the United States.

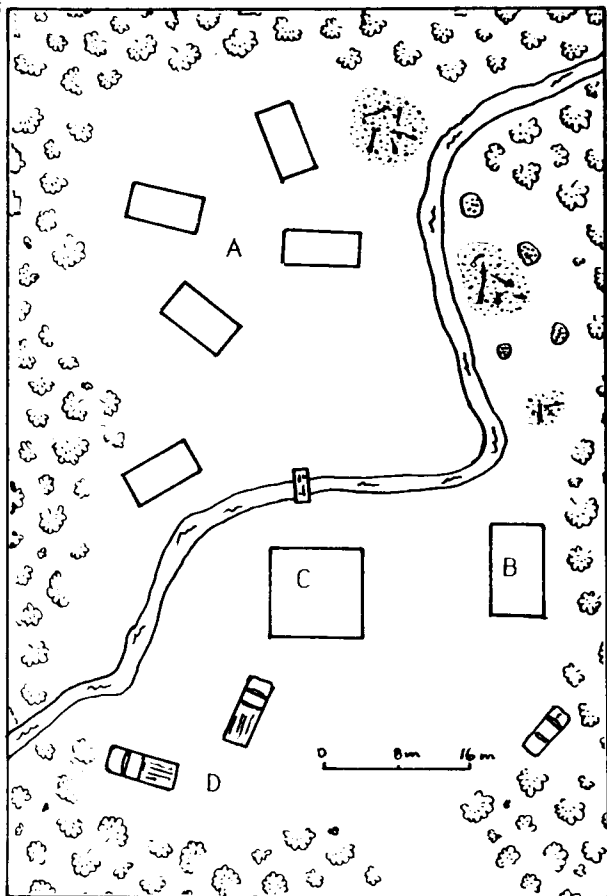


Since having U.S. troops on foreign soil is not socially acceptable (especially if they were caught), the CIA and DEA have arranged for a mercenary group to do the job. The team is to grab Montelongo and get him out of Colombia or, failing that, liquidate him.

There are no radar installations at Montelongo's home, but air traffic in and near Medellin is monitored by specialists working for Black 29. For this reason, the team will make a HALO (high altitude, low opening) parachute drop onto an abandoned airstrip southeast of the town of Santa Rosa de Osos which is roughly 60 kilometers northeast of Medellin.

Approach

From the airstrip, the team will make their way 20 km across the open country to Montelongo's hilltop home near Santa Rosa de Osos. If the team encounters any hostile troops or other personnel that might give away their presence, they have free license to make sure that such persons cannot do so (by whatever means necessary). The Colombian government is not to know of this invasion of their sovereignty. If any drug processing sites are discovered, the team is to eliminate them, providing that doing so will not jeopardize their mission.



Retrieval

The team will make a broadcast on a pre-arranged frequency about one half-hour before they go in to grab Montelongo (to warn the pick up crew). Then, when they need to be picked up, another message will bring a helicopter to the site within five minutes. A red flare placed by the team will show the pilot where to land.

Map Descriptions

Processing Site:

Carved out of the jungle, about 2,800 meters above sea level, the site is relatively flat and a stream flows from the northeast to the southwest through the clearing. In the center of the clearing, a one meter-wide foot bridge crosses the stream. Near the stream, above the storage shed (B) are found several circular depressions in the earth and a large amount of green coca leaves drying in the sun on coarse woolen cloths. During the day, workers can be found here turning the drying coca leaves and treading the dried leaves into a paste in a hydrochloric bath in the earthen depressions.

A. LIVING SITE: This is the living area for the workers and guards. Five shacks are arranged in a haphazard square. A few mangy dogs lie in the shade of the buildings and some chickens scratch out a living on the beaten earth. (Use the Shed/Hut floor plan from *Merc: 2000* page 79 for these buildings.)

B. CHEMICAL AND OTHER STORAGE: This shed is used to store the chemicals needed to process the cocaine. In one corner is one glass container of ethyl alcohol and some copper tubing, three 55-gallon drums of ether, two 55-gallon drums of acetone and six one-gallon glass bottles of hydrochloric acid. These materials are very flammable and extremely explosive. Also found here are ten large sacks of dried coca leaves waiting to be processed. Also stored in the shed are food stuffs and other supplies for cooking such as oil, flour, and white gas for portable cooking stoves. In a box in a corner are 400 rounds of 9mm ammunition. (Use the Vehicle Repair Shed from *Merc: 2000* page 79.)

C. PROCESSING PLANT: Inside are several large tables and sinks as well as four bunsen burners and numerous glass beakers, tubes, and vials. In one corner are a 55-gallon drum of ether, a 55-gallon

drum of acetone and a one-gallon glass bottle of hydrochloric acid. Also here are two double-burner camp stoves and a gallon of white gas in a metal can. Under one of the tables are five quart bottles of ethyl alcohol and a variety of pieces of distilling equipment. (Use the stable building from *Merc: 2000* page 79.)

D. CAR PARK: There are two one-ton trucks here with canvas tops over the beds. Also found here is a broken-down, abandoned Chevy Nova. It no longer runs and no one has bothered to tow it away. Eventually the jungle will claim it. With a little work, it could be repaired.

Montelongo Stronghold:

The stronghold is just outside the town of Santa Rosa de Osos, roughly 60 km from Medellin. The hilltop is approximately 2,400 meters above sea level. The compound is surrounded by a stone wall. A gravel track surrounds the perimeter. A paved road comes up the hill from the main road about eight km away.

A. GATEHOUSE AND STONE WALL: A small gatehouse manned by two guards is located at the perimeter entrance. The gate is made of chain-link reinforced with iron bars. The one meter-high wall is roughcut stone. Guard dogs usually have the run of the compound after dark. There are six Doberman pinschers and four German shepherds available. During the day, guard and two-dog patrols follow the walled perimeter at one hour intervals. Motion sensors are planted at 50 meter intervals between the wall and the gravel track. They are continually malfunctioning and there is a 50% chance that they will not be turned on. If they do work, the motion sensors will turn on flood lights mounted at strategic spots around the site.

B. PAVED PARKING AREA: This area is used for temporary parking for visitors' cars. It can double as a landing pad for a helicopter if necessary.

C. GARAGES: These two garages are used to house Montelongo's fleet of vehicles. C1 holds a 4WD F-250 Ford pickup (maroon) and a Toyota Landcruiser (dark green). One garage bay is empty. Also found here is a complete set of automotive repair tools, a ten HP air compressor, and a set of airpowered tools. C2 holds two Mercedes 450 SLs (one dark blue and one silver) and a Rolls Royce Silver Spirit (metallic grey).

D. TENNIS COURTS: These are frequently used by Montelongo, his family (when they are here), and house guests.

E. MAIN HOUSE: This is the mansion where Montelongo spends about 10-12

days a month while he meets with clients and entertains guests. (Use the mansion found on pages 76-77 of **Merc: 2000**.)

F. HELICOPTER LANDING PAD:

Guests quite often arrive by helicopter and land on this paved pad. Though Montelongo uses it sometimes, he prefers to travel to his stronghold by car.

G. SERVANTS' QUARTERS: This is where the cooks, guards, and maids live. (Use the building on page 179 of *Twilight: 2000*, but double the size of the basement storage room, make it into extra bedrooms, and eliminate the second floor as well as the stairs up to it.)

H. GUEST HOUSE: This building is used for visitors who have not been invited to stay in the main house. Particularly underlings of some of the important visitors. Sometimes, extra guards are allowed to stay here on a very temporary basis. (Use the building on page 178 of *Twilight: 2000* and eliminate the garage. Instead, use this area for a sort of dormitory with four extra beds. These could be beds for guests' bodyguards or less important underlings.)

Referee's Notes

The adventure will take place in two sections. First, the team will travel from the abandoned airstrip to the stronghold. Along the way, encounters with animals and reptiles can occur or perhaps an encounter with peasants out trapping birds, hunting for food, or clearing land for a new field. About one-third into the journey, the team should stumble upon the cocaine processing site. There will be 4-8 guards, 2 chemists, and at least 12 peasants working on drying the coca leaves or treading it into a paste in a hydrochloric acid solution out-of-doors in shallow pits in the ground. The guards are Veteran NPCs, carry either Uzi or MP-5 SMGs, and are nervous. They will not be surprised easily. The purpose of this encounter is to get the team's adrenalin flowing but not get anyone hurt too badly to continue.

The second part of the adventure will take place in and around Montelongo's stronghold. There should be at least four bodyguards in the main house. The guards should be available in numbers to make this snatch-and-grab job a bit more than a walk to the nearest convenience store. Exactly how many guards there should be will depend on how many team members there are and how experienced they are.

Also on the grounds are ordinary servants. There should be at least one cook, two household maids, a gardener, and a vehicle mechanic. These innocents could accidentally get in the way during the

firefight that is sure to erupt.

Try to make this part suspenseful at first as the team sneaks up and into the stronghold. Then, make the rest of the adventure full of action and confusion as the firefight begins. For a little more suspense, have some reinforcements show up from down the road and maybe have the helicopter pick up be a bit late arriving.

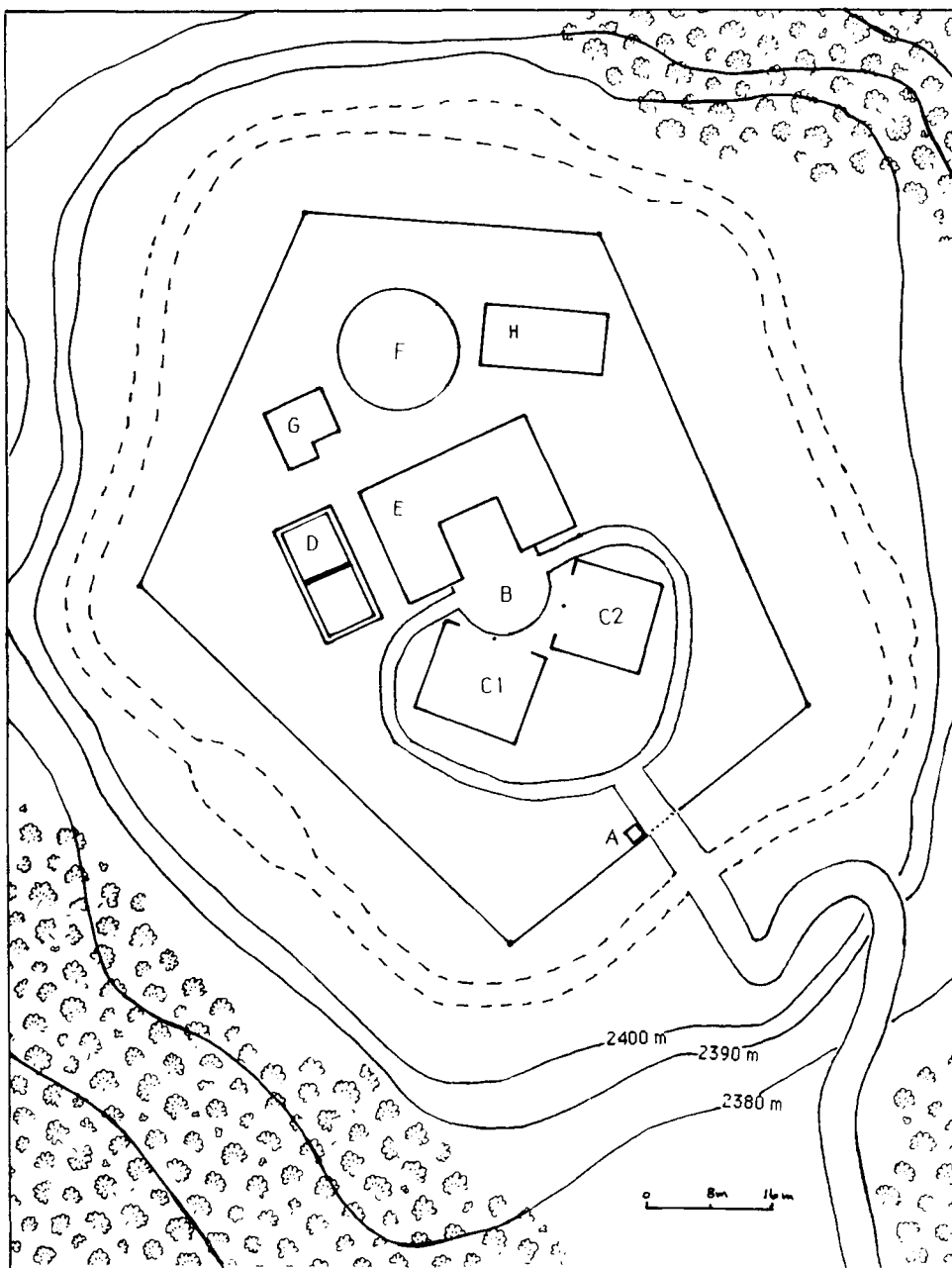
NPCs

All peasant workers found in this adventure are Novice NPCs and are armed only with machetes or (very rarely) old, worn out bolt action hunting rifles like the Mauser if they have any weapons at all. The stronghold guards are all Veteran NPCs, wear individual tactical radios or ITRs (see page 14 of **Merc: 2000** for

details) and also carry M12 or Uzi SMGs. Montelongo's bodyguards are Elite NPCs, wear ITRs and carry Uzi SMGs as well M92S automatic pistols.

Alternatives

If the players don't manage to silence the bodyguards and grab Montelongo, one of the body guards can call for help. This help would arrive within five minutes and would probably be guards from the gatehouse down at the main road, eight km away. Another option would be to have someone arrive to visit Montelongo by helicopter several minutes before the team moves in (or even as the perimeter guards are being silenced) with more body guards. All of this can certainly make life more interesting for the players. ■



OPTIONAL HELICOPTER (VTOL) RULES FOR BATTLETECH

G A R Y A . K A L I N

The *BattleTech* game system provides rules for helicopter (VTOL) operation. When the rules are compared to actual helicopters and their performance, it becomes clear that a few changes and additions are necessary to improve the realism of the simulation. The optional rules presented here allow realistic helicopters to be designed and used with the *BattleTech* rules.

Helicopters In Combat Operations

The development of the helicopter into a fast and sophisticated battlefield unit has changed the way most combat is conducted. First used in the Second World War, the helicopter has seen extensive service in all theaters of military operations. Not until the Vietnam War did the helicopter emerge as a successful attack aircraft.

Advances in technology have improved their versatility and performance. Today's helicopter is a heavily armed and armored gunship capable of engaging targets in day or night and in adverse weather conditions.

Tactics

The helicopter is one of the most versatile and yet vulnerable combat vehicles. While maneuverability is the VTOL's greatest asset, the lack of heavy armor restricts its usefulness as a major combat unit. However, it can still be a powerful battlefield weapon when deployed correctly.

Basic Guidelines For Deployment And Engagement Of VTOL Aircraft

1. VTOLs should limit their attacks on a target's frontal field of fire.
2. VTOLs should maneuver to take advantage of a target's limited fields of fire.
3. VTOLs should take advantage of as much covering terrain and objects as possible.
4. When ANY rotor damage is sustained, withdraw as



soon as practical from direct combat. The rotor system is lightly armored. The risk to a VTOL's safety from a damaged rotor system is too great to allow continued operation in a combat environment.

5. The VTOL's greatest enemy is another VTOL.

Scale

Each hex on the *BattleTech* map is 100 feet across.

Each hex on the *AeroTech* low altitude map is 1,640 feet across.

Each turn is equal to 10 seconds of real time.

Speed

Most attack helicopters have a top speed of over 200 mph and cruise at 150 to 175 mph. Advanced rotorcraft, like the X-wing and Rigid-Rotating Rotor aircraft, have top speeds of 300 to 500 mph. The table below converts miles per hour into hexes per turn.

HEXS MOVED PER TURN

MPH	BATTLETECH MAP	AEROTECH
100	15	1
150	22	1.5
200	29	2
300	44	3
400	59	4
500	73	5

Externally Mounted Weapons

One of the helicopter's greatest assets is its ability to carry a wide variety of weapons mounted on racks, which are mounted on external pylons. This allows the helicopter to carry the most effective weapons to neutralize a specific threat. Most helicopters and all attack helicopters have up to four racks with which to carry externally mounted weapons. Each rack can carry one weapon of any type. All externally

mounted weapons only fire out the forward row of hexs. One externally mounted weapon will be damaged and rendered useless when the location of its suspension receives damage. US weapons are very similar to their Soviet counterparts for gaming purposes.

EXTERNALLY MOUNTED WEAPONS

WEAPON	WEIGHT (TONS)	AMMO (SHOTS)
MK 50 machine gun pod (Note 1)	1	50
MK 25 machine gun pod (Note 1)	0.75	25
MK-7 long rng rocket pod (Note 2)	0.1	7
MK-19 short rng rocket pod (Note 3)	0.3	19
Tow missile launcher (Note 4)	0.5	4
Hellfire missile launcher (Note 5)	0.5	4
Stinger missile launcher (Note 6)	0.1	2

WEAPON NOTES:

1. This is the standard machine gun as found on the **Weapons and Equipment** charts.
2. This pod carries standard missiles. They can be fired in quantities of 1, 2, 3, or 7.
3. This pod carries standard short range missiles. They can be fired in quantities of 1, 2, 3, 8, 12, or 19.
4. The Tow has the range of a standard long range missile. It is a typical anti-armor missile and does 10 points of damage.
5. The Hellfire has the range of a standard long range missile. It is an advanced anti-armor missile and does 20 points of damage.
6. The Stinger has the range of a standard long range missile. It is an advanced air-to-air missile that can attack any flying target and does 6 points of damage.

Movement Loss Due To External Weapons

Movement points are lost when a helicopter carries heavy weapon loads. Flank speed is not allowed when a helicopter carries any externally mounted weapons. When a weapon is fired, ejected or damaged from combat, the helicopter may regain some of its lost movement points.

MOVEMENT LOSS

EXTERNAL WEAPON WEIGHT (TONS)	CRUISE MOVEMENT POINT LOSS
0.1 to 0.5	No loss
0.6 to 1.0	25%
1.1 to 2.0	50%

Note: All VTOLs can carry no more than 2 tons of stores.

section on vehicle construction for complete rules). The Lift Table found in the rules doesn't allow for the helicopter's full speed potential. The Revised VTOL Lift Table replaces the Lift Table found in the *BattleTech Manual*.

REVISED VTOL LIFT TABLE

TONNAGE	LIFT FACTOR
1-5	50
6-10	100
11-20	200
21-30	300

Note: Negative numbers are not allowed when computing the engine rating.

Speed Limits

Conventional VTOL cruising speed range: 15-20 movement points.

Conventional VTOL flank speed maximum (never to be exceeded): 30 movement points.

Typical Conventional Helicopters

UH-1 Huey

Origin: USA Type: Utility Transport Helicopter
 Speed: Cruise=18 Flank=27
 Crew: 2 Passengers: 8
 Weight: 3 tons (4.75 max)
 Internal Structure: 0.5 tons (1 point) Engine: 1 ton
 Controls: 0.15 tons Rotor: 0.5 tons
 Armor: 0.85 tons (Armor factor: 14 points)
 Armor locations values: Front: 4 Left: 2 Right: 2
 Rear: 2 Rotor: 2
Note: The UH-1 can be fitted with an external mounting assembly allowing 4 racks for weapons weighing up to 1.75 tons. All fixed forward firing.

AH-64 Apache

Origin: USA Type: Anti-Armor Attack Helicopter
 Crew: 2
 Speed: Cruise=20 Flank=30
 Weight: 5.5 tons (8.8 max)
 Internal Structure: 0.5 tons (1 point) Engine: 1 ton
 Controls: 0.5 tons Rotor: 0.5 tons
 Armor: 2 tons (Armor factor: 32 points)
 Armor location values: Front: 10 Left: 8 Right: 8
 Rear: 4 Rotor: 2
Weapons: One Machine Gun with ammo for 50 shots: 1 ton (nose mounted with 180 degree field of fire)
Note: The AH-64 has wing pylons with 4 racks for weapons. Each wing has a mount for one Stinger Missile Launcher. All wing weapons are fixed forward firing.

MI-28 Havoc

Origin: USSR Type: Anti-Armor/Air Combat Helicopter
 Crew: 2
 Speed: Cruise=20 Flank=30
 Weight: 7.5 tons (10 max)
 Internal Structure: 1 ton (1 point) Engine: 3 tons

Designing Conventional Helicopters

A few modifications have been made to the standard design process for VTOLs (consult the *BattleTech Manual*

Controls: 0.375 tons Rotor: 0.5 tons
 Armor: 1.6 tons (Armor factor: 26 points)
 Armor locations values: Front: 10 Left: 6 Right: 6
 Rear: 2 Rotor: 2

Weapons: One Machine Gun with ammo for 50 shots: 1 ton (nose mounted with 180 degree field of fire)

Note: The MI-28 has wing pylons with 4 racks for weapons. Each wing has a mount for one Stinger Missile Launcher.

Advanced VTOL Combat Operations

The technology for advanced VTOLs using the X-Wing and RCR rotor systems was available in the late 20th century. These rotor systems enabled VTOLs to travel at two to three times faster than conventional helicopters. X-Wing and RCR VTOLs are capable of moving at speeds of both conventional aircraft and helicopters. It's a common tactic of advanced VTOL pilots to enter the battlefield at aircraft speeds to engage air cover and slow to helicopter speeds to engage ground targets. They use their increased speed to improve their attack advantage or to remove themselves from unfavorable situations.

The X-Wing Rotor System

Advances in computer and plastic graphite composite technology made possible the X-Wing rotor system. Developed in the late 20th century, the X-Wing rotor turned the common helicopter into a true multi-mission vehicle. The X-Wing rotor is specially designed to allow VTOLs the speed

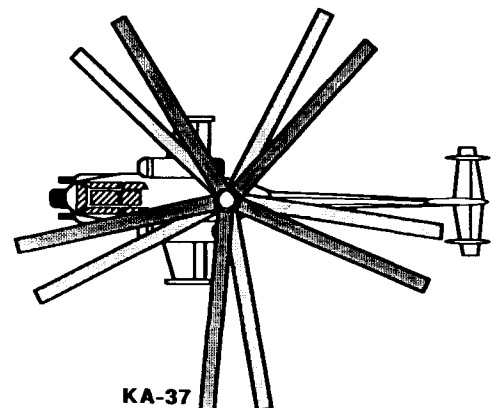
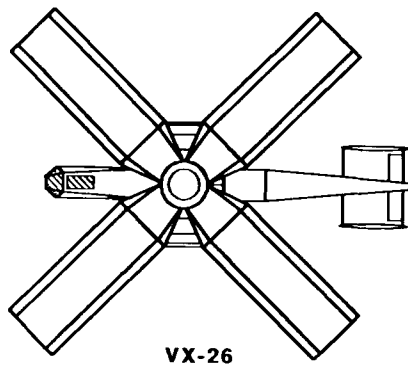
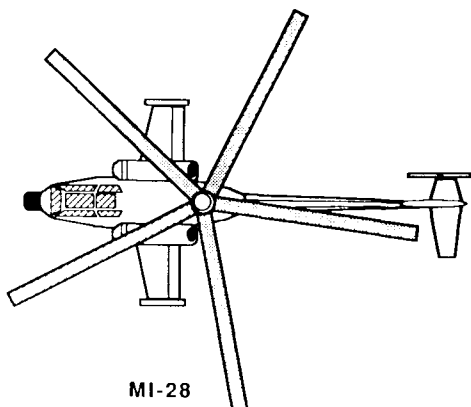
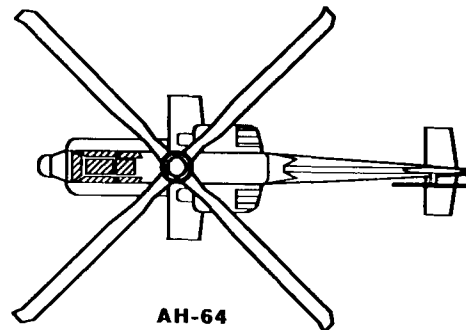
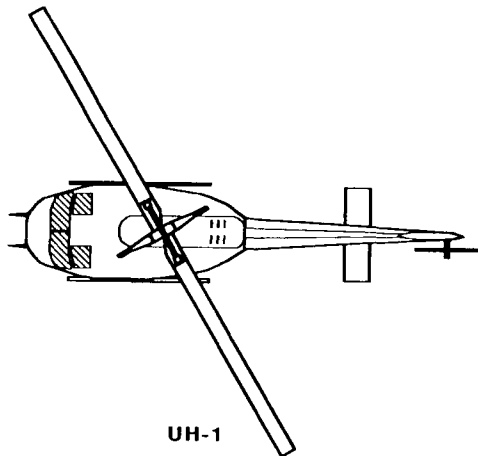
of conventional aircraft and the vertical takeoff and landing characteristic of helicopters. The X-Wing rotor acts like a normal helicopter rotor at conventional helicopter speeds of 200 mph or lower. The X-Wing rotor can stop turning while in flight, converting into an air foil and using a jet turbine engine for horizontal thrust. This allows a cruising speed of 200 to 300 mph and a flank speed of up to 500 mph. The X-Wing rotor is driven by compressed air generated with a conventional jet turbine engine. The compressed air is forced through slots in the trailing edge of the rotor, giving lift and control to the vehicle.

The RCR Rotor System

The Rigid-Counter-Rotating rotor (RCR) VTOL uses the same plastic graphite composite technology that was developed for the X-Wing. The RCR VTOL has two sets of rotor blades, rotating opposite of each other. The counter-rotating blades eliminate the need for a tail rotor, reducing the weight and complexity of the vehicle. Normal helicopter rotors are flexible, allowing great maneuverability but only at low speeds. The rigid rotor allows the use of a jet turbine to increase its horizontal cruise speed to 200 to 250 mph and a flank speed of up to 350 mph.

Designing X-Wing And RCR VTOLs

A few modifications have been made to the standard design process for X-Wing and RCR vehicles (consult the *BattleTech Manual* section on vehicle construction for complete rules of designing VTOLs). Advanced VTOLs have



an increased lift factor. The Advanced VTOL Lift Table is only used for advanced VTOLs like the X-Wing and the RCR vehicles and replaces the Lift Table found in the *BattleTech Manual* when constructing advanced VTOLs.

ADVANCED VTOL LIFT TABLE

MAXIMUM TONNAGE	RCR LIFT FACTOR	X-WING LIFT FACTOR
1-5	140	150
6-10	180	250
11-15	310	450
16-20	460	650
21-25	600	850
26-30	750	1050

Note: Negative numbers are not allowed when computing the engine rating.

Speed Limits

RCR cruising speed range: 25-33 movement points.

RCR flank speed maximum (never to be exceeded): 50 movement points.

X-Wing cruising speed range: 35-48 movement points.

X-Wing flank speed maximum (never to be exceeded): 73 movement points.

Rotor Armor

The X-Wing and RCR VTOLs have large multi-blade rotor systems. The rotors may have an armor rating up to 4 points.

Typical Advanced VTOLs

VX-26

Origin: USA Type: X-Wing Attack Helicopter Crew: 2

Speed: Cruise=48 Flank=73

Weight: 11 tons (13 max)

Internal Structure: 1.1 tons (2 points) Engine: 5 tons

Controls: 0.55 tons Rotor: 1.1 tons

A armor: 2.25 tons (Armor factor: 36 points)

A armor location values: Front: 12 Left: 7 Right: 7

Rear: 6 Rotor: 4

Weapons: One Machine Gun with ammo for 50 shots: 1 ton (nose mounted with 180 degree field of fire)

Note: The VX-26 has wing pylons with 4 racks for weapons. Each wing has a mount for one Stinger Missile Launcher. All wing weapons are fixed forward firing.

KA-37

Origin: USSR Type: RCR Attack Helicopter Crew: 2

Speed: Cruise=25 Flank=37

Weight: 8 tons (10 max)

Internal Structure: 1 ton (1 point) Engine: 1 ton

Controls: 0.4 tons Rotor: 0.8 tons

A armor: 1.8 tons (Armor factor: 28 points)

A armor location values: Front: 10 Left: 5 Right: 5

Rear: 4 Rotor: 4

Weapons: One Machine Gun with ammo for 50 shots: 1 ton (nose mounted with 180 degree field of fire). Two Machine Guns with ammo for 50 shots: 2 tons (fixed forward field of fire)

Note: The KA-37 has wing pylons with 6 racks for weapons. Each wing has a mount for one Stinger Missile Launcher. All wing weapons are fixed forward firing.

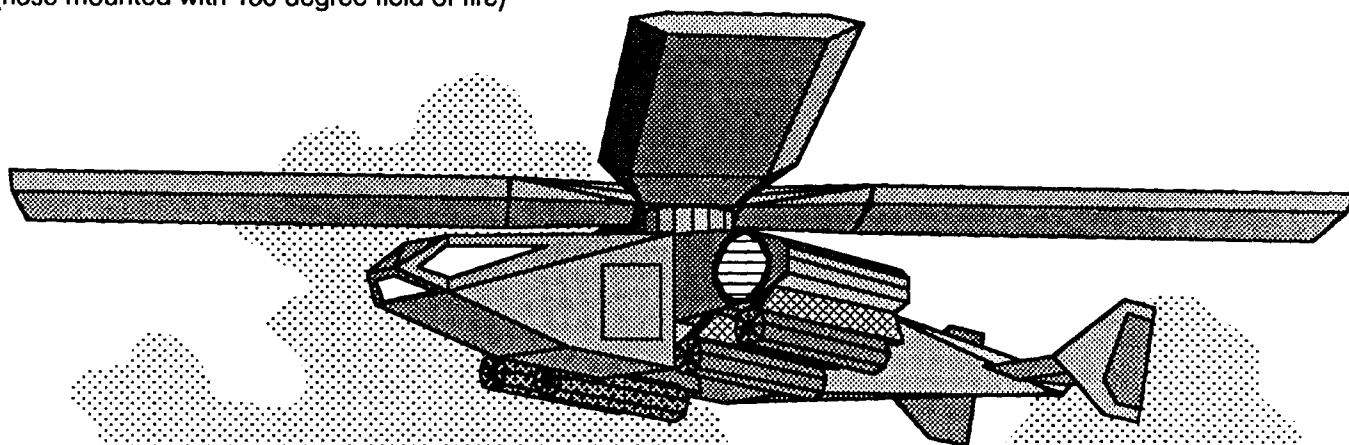
Helicopters In Combat

The *BattleTech* rules for helicopter combat and movement are unchanged. The Stinger, Tow and Hellfire missiles have increased damage values to reflect their real world abilities. The technology that makes these missiles more damaging is their anti-armor warheads, not micro chips. Using them in a *BattleTech* scenario may off balance the game. If a 20th century scenario is being played, the missiles should be used. The helicopters and missiles presented here could represent Clan VTOLs. Players should use their own discretion.

The Stinger Air-To-Air Missile

The Stinger is a low cost heat seeking missile. It may only be used against flying targets. Units may defend against the Stinger by using flare counter-measures. A flare counter-measure defense represents several hot burning flares launched from the target to confuse incoming heat seeking missiles. They are standard equipment on most flying vehicles. Typical flare launchers carry enough flares for 10 flare counter-measure launches.

Using flares gives the target a flare modifier. The flare modifier adds 1 to the To Hit dice roll for each flare counter-measure defense used in one game turn. ■



It was a typical night at Arnold's Bar and Armory at seventh and Gatesville. Road Warriors mixed it up with the Corporate Warriors (known as 'Solos'), with the bar's own weapons provided free of charge, as long as the customer checked his own weapon in with the hat check girl up front. In one corner of the bar was a stage for the women to stuff money into the G-strings that the men wore. On the other side, naked women danced for the same reason—cash. The din coming out of the speakers was the latest by the cyberband 'Veribat'. Stardust trails flashed across the walls and ceiling from the lights shining on the old fashioned disco globes. Smoke drifted up to the ceiling from all the clients who still got a high from doing MaryJane.

Off to the side near the dancing stage with the women, Johnny Gibson, alias "Shotgun," sipped at a Bend-Me-Over as an olive-skinned dancer flashed him a smile and ground herself down to the stage floor, leaning over to where Shotgun watched. Closer and closer she moved until her ample chest was only centimeters from his face. A slender hand reached out to stroke Johnny along the right side of his face, near the computer input/output jacks embedded in his skull at the temple. These Cybernetic implants allowed the user to mentally interface with a computer system and to operate the software from "within." The girl slowly stood back up, turned around to present her posterior with the thin white strand of her G-string caught between the two creamy globes of flesh.

"Okay darling. Here's a five for that one." He slipped a green into her waistband, lingering over the feel of her soft skin.

As the dancer stood up to go to another part of the stage, Shotgun spied an old friend entering the bar, the one he'd been awaiting for over an hour now. Johnny moved away to intercept the stunning woman in black leather and fishnet body stockings. "Ace! Ace! Over here!" he yelled.

Along the way to meet his lady friend, Shotgun picked up snatches of conversations.

"The Japos are going to raise the prime rate over here again. Can you believe that?"

"...heard that there was an accident on the moon last week. A dome belonging to the Europeans and all in it were wiped out."

"Capetown is still holding up under the siege. Mitsu just delivered a freighter's worth of food past the blackies blockade..."

Ace had the most beautiful jade green eyes sparkling under auburn bangs, eyes that tracked him like the target sensors on a Blackcat stealth 'copter. Her breasts were neither too large, nor too small, but filled out her outfit perfectly enough to catch the eye of every man in the bar. She flashed a shark's grin. Once he was within range she said, "Johnny Shotgun Gibson you old fart. Still can't get any, I see."

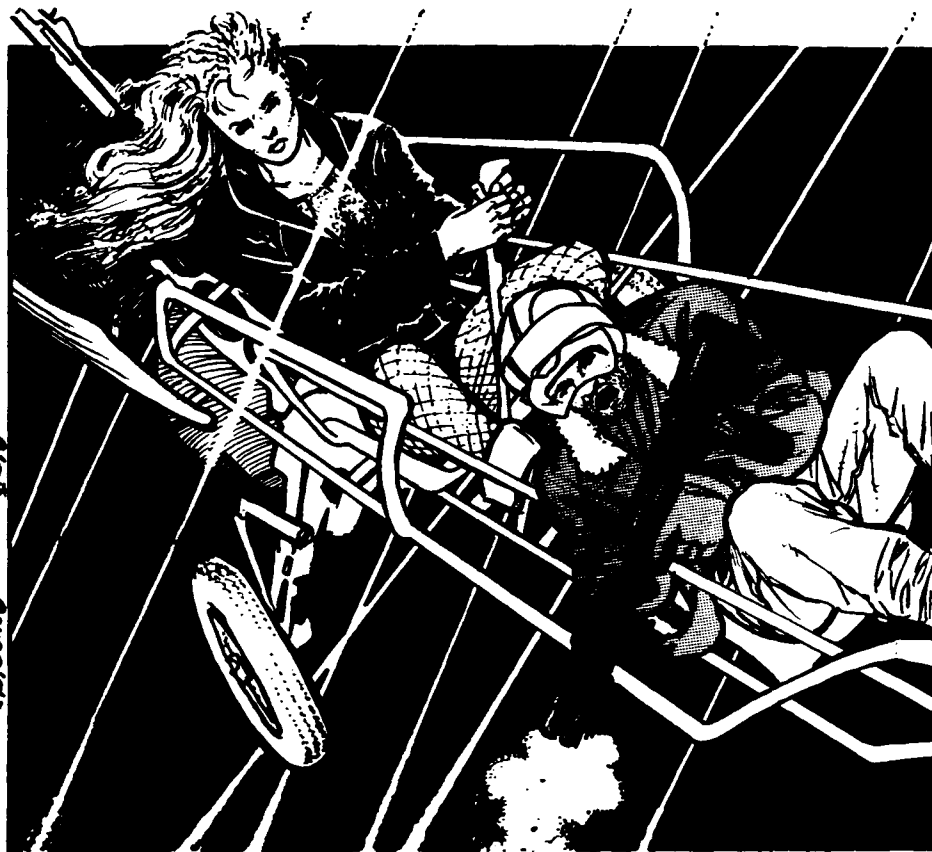
"Always with the negative vibes, sweetheart. You know you're the only wench for me. Come on over to my table and let's catch up."

"No. I want to see some real men."

"Ahhh. It's nice to know that you still care about me. Anyway, you were the one who arranged this meeting—and showed up late."

Shotgun watched as Ace hesitated for a moment before inserting her right arm through his left to be escorted back to his table. They were delayed by a knife fight, but eventually made it back to his table. Arnold's trauma team was there right away to clean up the mess.

Johnny looked his lady friend over. Shelly "Ace" Townsend wore a black fishnet bodystocking made out of kevlar fibers. More kevlar body



L-I-N-K + U-P

D O N W. S H A N K S

armor was inside the leggy black leather body suit with a silver stud spike belt holding a pistol holster, a similar studded spike collar around her throat, and her feet were incased in the latest 'Gestapo' boots. A very sharp contrast to Gibson's faded bomber jacket, bluejeans, and dirty cowboy boots. "Shelly, Shelly, Shelly. Time has flown by for both of us."

"What did you expect after a divorce? You're a road warrior and a Netrunner. I'm a solo for Mitsu Inc. Do most of my work in the Pacific rim now days. You wanted to stay here in the ruins of America. The big bucks are to be had in Japan."

"Then why are you here asking for me? Sounds to me like Ace is the Superwoman of twenty ought thirty four."

"Dear ex-hubby of mine. I need your talents to get me to the ruins of a certain place not far from here. What's more, I'm authorized to pay double your normal rate. Sooo...you'll be gettin' fifty K instead of twenty-five." She looked her ex's face over very closely, waiting for his answer.

"OK, I want to hear more. Let's blow over to my digs to chat."

One good thing about living in the mountains of New Mexico in New Albuguerque was that one could still see the stars at night instead of the chemical fog that one got in the megacities such as Los Frisco or the megacomplex stretching

from Norfolk north to Boston, with police AV-2s (Tactical Urban Assault vehicles) and their ambulance cousins crisscrossing the night sky, lights flashing and sirens screaming to the city below.

Shotgun turned the wheel of his 2030 Ford Thunderbird-X into the apartment fortress compound that he lived at. The turbine powered by meta-alcohol and methane spun itself to rest and silence in his parking space. The remote-control missile and .30 caliber chain gun turret on the back deck remained facing forward as the gull-wing doors popped open and slid back along the midnight blue body. Shotgun waved hello to the night guard back towards the entry way, and escorted his lady friend into the apartment building. His trademark, an Atchison assault shotgun with a drum magazine in bullpup configuration, was at the ready in his right hand.

A quite natural smile appeared on Ace's face, to which Johnny was puzzled when he opened the main door for her. When asked about her sudden smile, she said, quoting the guard, "How does old Shotgun get all the good lookin' ones?"

"If only he knew the real truth about us. But, how did you—oh. Bionic ears, right? He's a good twenty-eight to thirty meters away."

She pointed to her left ear. "It's the latest in cyber-bionic ears." Ace kept her smile plastered on her face. It was one of those smiles women have saying, "I've got several more secrets and you're not going to get any (of them)."

Ace laid her hand along his three-day-growth-of-beard-covered cheek. "Still pretending to be a Texas cowboy, aren't we? Picked up any new John Wayne, or Indiana Jones cyber-programs?"

"Just get inside, willya."

Once safely cocooned in his apartment they got down to business. Inside the modest sized apartment, Shotgun noticed Ace checking out his video disk library near the flat screen TV. Slim fingers traced a pattern scanning over the titles. Most of the films were action/adventure in nature. The Star Wars and Indiana Jones trilogies. The original Batman TV series starring Adam West and the later Batman movies of the late 1980s and 1990s. Several John Wayne westerns and war movies mixed in with the 'Conan' type shows. She looked back at Shotgun. "And I'll bet that your cyber-programs match all of these titles." Shotgun decided not to respond.

Ace took out a small device and swept the room for bugs and other masty electronic vermin. Once done, she replaced it back into her leather jacket and sat down at the computer desk. She slipped a datachip disk out of one of her other pockets and used the mouse to bring the information up on screen.

"Mitsu has contracted with me to do a Bag Job. And to be sure that it's a sanitized job. It will require you to perform a technical penetration and locate a certain laser disc full of neat junk just waiting for us in downtown Dallas."

Johnny grabbed the back of her chair and whirled her around to face him. "Go into that radioactive pit?! Damn! No wonder you haven't found anybody yet to take you there. I'm not going either. Get out of here!" He grabbed for her arms, but she performed a neat little martial arts twist that sent Gibson flying in a ballistic arc over the sofa into the coffee table, shattering its glass top.

"Dear," she went on, "let me finish. There is something else that we have to do there. In order to retrieve this disc out of the vault like I told you before your outburst, I need a Netrunner to enter the mainframe in the Williams building—that's where we are going—and discover its location. It's hidden in the data files there."

"No way in Hell! That place is still going to be hot for another month. Those terrorists did a real bang-up job with that extra dirty neutron bomb at Love Field. And all the smaller ones along the loop. Plus, the Texas Guard is keeping everybody out. It's tighter than a ten year old virgin."

"You mean to tell me that you actually found a virgin that old over here?" she demurely asked.

"You know what I mean, dammit. This can't be legal, either."

"Ha ha ha. Legal? What's legal in the states now? The USA is no more. It's just a collection of citystates, totally dependent on imports for food, energy, raw materials. The Corporates see to that. The lifestyles that our grandparents lived are nothing more than fairy tales we tell to children."

"At least I didn't just give up to go and live in Japan. I hear that they are going back to their old samurai ways and other quaint old customs."

"It's a better lifestyle for me than it was for you. I get to travel the world doing my job. Sometimes, I even go up to the European space stations or even the moon. Look at you. The people in this berg are deluding themselves about bringing back the old America. It's gone the way of the pharaohs. The Drug War, the Second Mexican War, the Fifth Terrorist War finally did in our dear old country. Not to mention the plague years that took out over a quarter of the planet's population.

On top of the deaths still being recorded as dying from AIDS—Two. And need I tell you about the pollution over here on this side of the globe?"

Shotgun climbed out of his coffee table and went face to face with his ex-wife. "Asia, my dear wife, still produces more toxic fumes than Los Frisco did ten years ago. You are beginning to believe in our own bullshit press."

"John," Ace whispered, "this is a way to pay off New Detroit for that fancy car of yours you had them build."

"Wrong, Ace. The Blue Machine is all paid for after I did that run into Utah for them. In fact, I receive royalty checks from Ford since they've started to market the Thunderbird-X. Especially when someone orders the weapons package and four wheel drive options like I have on the prototype out there. You see, Ace, Mitsu didn't get all the information it wanted about me and my affairs like you believed they did."

Johnny went into the kitchen and came back with two cans of beer and handed one to Ace. They drank in silence for several minutes. Ace ejected her disk and turned the computer off. Standing, she embraced Johnny. "I know something else about this mission that will make even you beg me to allow you to come along. That same computer mainframe is hooked up to Central Bank and Trust. Mitsu has one third interest in it and will allow you to transfer their funds into your account."

Johnny's steel grey eyes bored into Ace's green eyes. "What is on this disk that Mitsu is willing to go to war with the nation of Texas over?"

Kissing him on his stubby cheek, "Ours is not to reason why."

"But to do or die is how that line ends, Ace. Even having sex with you again is not going to be enough for this job. We'll be driving into punk road warrior territory on the other side of Clovis. Have to jog down to Lubbock to restock our fuel and ammo. And then there's the three hundred mile stretch between Lubbock and Fort Worth where farmers battle it out between the punks and the druggies."

She undid his red and white plaid western shirt and rubbed her hands over his hairy chest. He responded by helping her out of her jacket and unzipping her bodysuit, noticing several scars that were not on her person the last time they made love. To his trained eye, Shelly's left arm was now bionic. The newer bionic limbs on the market today can totally fool anyone. Another surprise was the fact that he could feel the inserted body armor beneath the epidermis. To which he remarked, "That's one way to keep your figure."

There was no need for a response. Shotgun picked his ex up in his arms and carried her into the bedroom. Their bodies were now on automatic, but their thoughts were on the journey to come.

It was a typical mid-morning, mid-August Texas day. Not a cloud in the clear blue sky above. The fields to either side of the four lane divided highway were full of cotton and wheat stubble. Here and there, the burnt-out shell of a truck or car rested on its rusting metal rims.

From over the slight rise in the terrain raced Shotgun and his Thunderbird-X, trading machinegun fire with an old model Dodge pickup and twenty or so punk riders. A few bullets skipped off the armored right side of the car. The wind whipped the multi-color hairdos of the bikers around their faces as another burst was

fired off.

Ace manned the manual controls to the weapons package from the righthand seat. Johnny was plugged into the car's computer. In his mind, fuel flow figures, engine temperatures, tire pressures, current weight of the car, conditions of the road surface, and hundreds of other factors received his constant attention with each millisecond of time passing in the 'real' world. Digital readouts also flashed onto the tinted visor of his blue and white helmet.

"Okay, Ace. I've only got two more LAWS in the launcher. Can't let you play with these guys anymore than you already have."

"Shut it up. I'm aiming."

Another LAWS rocket screamed out of the launcher to impact against the front end of the last punk rocker's pickup truck making the vehicle flip end over end to block the roadway. One of the bikers couldn't turn out of the way quickly enough and he flipped end over end as well. The others decided to let the blue Thunderbird-X pass on by. Easier pickings were to be had elsewhere.

Ace raised her helmet visor and flashed Shotgun a victory grin.

Johnny kept the speedometer at a moderate 95 mph pace until the last smoking wreck was about three miles behind. He pulled off to the side of the road and stopped, double checking the radar readouts. No targets closing in on them from behind. He disconnected the two wires from the overhead console panel and flipped up the tinted, electronic visor to his helmet. "What do you think about this car now?"

Ace returned his gaze. "Fancy. But it's real easy to use up a lot of ammo."

"That's why I usually control weapons fire while I'm in the computer. It's been awhile since I went punk hunting. Feels good. We'll stop in Lubbock and get a refill and reload as we planned." He reinserted the wire jacks that exited his helmet at the right temple into the overhead console and accelerated back onto the roadway, twin plumes of dust rising from behind the rear tires.

The trip into and out of the fortress city of Lubbock created no problems. Shotgun decided not to stay on U.S. 84 to Roscoe and join up with Interstate 20 there to go into Abilene and on into Fort Worth. Because it was a heavy traffic road, all weapons-equipped motor vehicles were required to have their weapons "peace sealed," meaning sticking red flags on all visible weapons and putting a lock on the inside arming switch. Gibson decided on U.S. 82 as if he were going to go to Wichita Falls. It would be at Seymour that he would take State 114 to Jacksboro and join up with State 199 into northwestern Fort Worth.

The drive through the South Plains counties east of Lubbock went without any troubles what so ever. Things started happening in Seymour. First they had to evade a Texas Guard Tank Company battling a combined arms punk army the size of which neither Ace nor Shotgun had ever seen or heard about before. It was early evening by then and the town of Seymour lit up the sky with tracer rounds. Backtracking and detouring took the couple down to Haskell and onto U.S. 380, two hours behind schedule. Eventually, the Thunderbird-X arrived in Jacksboro, Texas, where they tried to make up the lost time.

Outside of Azle, Ace motioned Johnny to take a farm market road to the north which he did. Six miles later, she directed him to park near a burned out farm not far from Eagle Mountain Lake. The digital clock in the dashboard was flashing 9:57

PM. Shotgun checked his motion detection sensors and viewed the outside world in the infra-red. No humans or any other animals were in the area.

"So, what's the plan? Why are we sitting here in the shadow of a metal tool shed?" he inquired.

Ace turned to look at Shotgun. "First, we get to stretch our legs. Second, you help me unload the ultralight gyrocopter from the backseat. Third, we fly into Dallas below radar. Simple, really."

Shaking his head in disbelief, "Why did I even bother to ask? Okay. Let's do it."

"You know, Shotgun," Ace said as she climbed out of the righthand car window, "with the Guard fighting back in Seymour, it just might be easier to sneak into Dallas."

"Ahhh! That feels good," he said, stretching his arms up above his head. "Maybe. But don't bet on it. And by the way, how are we going to see our way into Dallas flying a little ultralight?"

"Because, dear, I have the map stored on a brain chip. You and I both know how to fly this thing using the low light intensifiers included in our helmets. But my chip has the latest information on where the radar sites are, the condition of downtown, location of patrols and anti-aircraft batteries. And lots of other neat stuff."

"'Neat stuff' she says. I didn't feel any armor plating in your butt the other night. And I sure as hell don't have any in mine."

"Don't worry. I'll keep us away from the patrols."

"Don't worry, she said. I'll keep us away from the patrols." You're not doing so well at that, are you?" Shotgun yelled into his mic as he fired off a drum of solid shot down towards the ground and behind the little red fiberglass gyrocopter. Target information was being flashed onto the inner visor of his helmet from the minicomp hooked up with his shotgun. It helped him keep track of the type of ammunition and number of rounds remaining in the drum.

"Oh will you stop complaining. I'm trying to drive, can't you see!" Ace screamed.

A hundred feet below on Interstate 30 where Fort Worth and Arlington joined, a Texas Guard Hummer drove along at breakneck speed; the squad of troopers in back fired off their Sternmeyer M-95A2 5.56mm NATO caseless assault rifles using depleted uranium rounds. Buzzsaws screamed by Ace's and Shotgun's ears in the semi-enclosed cockpit of the gyrocopter. And more important, not one bullet had yet hit their tiny craft.

Turning around in his seat to reload and to look at his ex-wife, Shotgun said, "Damn! Sure would like to get my own Sternmeyer once we get back to New Albuquerque."

"Know what you mean. Looks like we'll have to divert down to Duncanville, then swing back up into central Dallas."

"No way. You'll be flying over the old Naval Air Station at Mountain Creek Lake. Turn back to the north now and follow the Trinity River and head for Love Field."

"Thought you didn't want to go there?"

"I said 'head for Love Field,' not 'fly over.' Once we're within the boundary of Loop 12, turn back towards I-30."

"Actually, the Williams building is near the Market Center. If we made like we really wanted to go to Love Field, that could buy us some extra time now since we have been discovered."

More buzzsaws flashed by the little gyrocop-

ter. "Do whatever you want, Ace. Just do it!" Johnny fired off some more rounds.

While assembling the gyrocopter, Ace had told Johnny that they would have to land on the roof of the Williams building and then make their way down to the computer room. Thankfully, the Williams building was only twenty-five stories tall, one of the little ones built in the last century. Landing was no problem after the couple ditched their tail just inside the loop. It was unnerving to fly between darkened office buildings in that dead city. Several tall columns of fire with black oily smoke climbing up into the night sky stood as grave markers for the thousands who died in the attack. If it wasn't for the nose filters both of them wore, they would not have been able to get this far into Dallas. Ace glided the little red machine within scant inches of one of the air-conditioning modules. Take-off would require the use of the little rocket booster nestled underneath the main landing gear brace near where the tail boom joined the main body.

Shotgun finished staking the tie downs into the roof while Ace checked her sensors. No heat sources that could be human bodies were anywhere near the building. On the outside, that is.

Entering the building required Ace to punch a code number into the inspection hatchway. Twenty minutes later, the two interlopers were inside the Williams building's main computer room. The clean up crews had yet to go through floor by floor of this building. Johnny carefully removed what once was a woman from behind a desk and laid her out on the floor. Then he seated himself before a standard interface terminal and withdrew a small package from his jacket pocket; a couple' plug in jacks and an interface modem with personal datachip disk to store new information on.

"Shotgun, I'm going on down to the main floor to check out the security office. Be back in ten."

"OK, Ace. I'll track you through the monitors when you get down there."

Once Shotgun was all set, he patched "IN." His mind filled with images of grey-white static in a whirlpool as his "computer program of himself" dropped "On Line."

Johnny Gibson was now in Michael Keaton's version of *Batman*. All around him was the 1989 movie version of Gotham City. This was just one version of the 'Comic Series' of interface programs out on the market. He had a copy of the Adam West *Batman* program, but it crashed in Utah. The "Batcave" was really a data wall of layered static that "reflected" any trace program from finding the "entry way" that the Netrunner used to enter the computer system. Shotgun was using a Level Six protection program, the next to the best available on the market.

The roads in this city were really the electrical lines of the system. Computer workstations, disk storage units, other modems were "buildings." Computer "defense" systems were brick walls that accepted only coded messages to allow the user to go any further. And there was a large one right in front of him. Batman (Shotgun) withdrew a hammer from his utility belt and aimed at the first wall in front of him. In appearance, it looked like a 20 pound sledgehammer. With a mighty swing, the first wall came crashing down. Batman was well aware that using a program would alert any nearby defense programs. On the other side of

the wall was a medium size, shaggy black dog with a spike collar. A Level Three Alarm program. It leaped toward the intruder, teeth bared. Another item appeared in Batman's hand from the utility belt. It was, of course, a twin-barreled shotgun, which he fired. This caused the Watchdog program to crash and disappear.

Batman called up the Batmobile and it appeared by his right side. He climbed in and off the computer car went. Inside the twin seat cockpit, Batman activated his 'stealth' program. Driving down the city street, the Batmobile raced past many low level security programs that had activated since the intrusion into the system one quarter of a second ago in the "outside real time."

He stopped before the police station and climbed out. Everything was still going A-okay. Using a Level Four Codecracker, Batman gained entry into the Williams building security office and swaggered over to the "TV Monitor" room. Playing with the controls there, he finally sighted Ace just exiting the elevator on the ground floor, checking the corners for any possible ambush. Opening up the TV console in the computer generated police station, Batman inserted a little program to relay Ace's image directly back to the Batmobile (or a little Sony TV-Watchman program that was located inside his utility belt main program).

That done, he went over to the "Dispatcher" room to get a copy of this system's map of the city. He had to stop outside of the room. The Joker stood waiting for him. The Joker was actually a cover for what was called in Netrunner terminology a "Demon." A program similar in function to his utility belt program except that a Demon carried programs to track down and either eject a Netrunner or kill one outright, and everything possible in between. Batman activated his "Invisibility" program and brought out his shotgun again. The belt also provided a special, one-shot bullet designed for such cases as this one. It was a "Worm Bullet," a short program to drill into a Demon and kill it.

With a roaring laugh, the Joker turned and attacked. Batman's invisibility program mustn't have been powerful enough to prevent the Joker from seeing through.

"You can't hide from me now. Ha ha ha!!!" cried the Joker, still laughing.

A shotgun blast of fire, and the Demon crashed to the floor and vanished with one last taunt. "You're supposed to be the good guy! You shouldn't have killed me!" Quickly, Batman entered the room and took a picture with a small camera that transmitted the image back to the Batmobile.

It was now time to go over to "City Hall" which was in reality the Central Data Processor. There, inside the massive structure, Batman met the mayor.

"So, you are Batman? You've made it this far and subverted my defense programs. What information do you request?" spoke the mayor.

In other programs like the *Dungeon*, the mayor would be either a king or a mighty wizard.

"Thank you, Mr. Mayor. I have been informed that the Data Disk Fire Arrow Able Seven is stored within the Williams storage vault. I require access to same."

The mayor accessed the requested information, which took a long time in the Netverse (Net universe). Eventually, the mayor answered, "I do have that file listed in my records, Batman. But, there is a flag on it—directed to you, Johnny Shotgun Gibson."

"What?! To me directly? How?"

"It's signed 'Corsair.' It also has the seal of the United States encoded."

"Let me see the flag."

Before his eyes, a red flag materialized next to the mayor with a post-it note tacked on. It read:

SHOTGUN—I KNEW THAT ACE WAS GOING TO GET YOU FOR THIS RUN. MITSU HAS DEVELOPED A BIOLOGICAL WARFARE AGENT THAT DIRECTLY ATTACKS A PERSON'S DNA CODE. THIS PARTICULAR AGENT IS CODED TO ATTACK NON-ASIANS. HOW DO I KNOW THIS? I WAS ON THE TEAM THAT THE GOVERNMENT SENT IN TO DESTROY THE LAB. THE GUARDS CAUGHT VEGAS—REMEMBER HER? I TAPPED INTO THE NET AND WITNESSED THEM PLACING HER IN A TEST CHAMBER. IT WASN'T PRETTY. IT WAS LIKE HER SKIN ERUPTED IN SORES. IT TOOK A WHILE FOR HER TO DIE.

DON'T LET ACE GET THIS DISK. SHE'S BEEN MINDWIPE AND REPROGRAMMED! SHE'S THE PERSONAL SNATCH OF SHO FUJITA, CHIEF CNO OF MITSU. A REAL BANZAI TYPE DREAMING OF EMPIRE. THE JAPS CONQUERED US ECONOMICALLY IN THE LAST CENTURY. HE WANTS TO FINISH THE JOB MILITARILY NOW. I KNOW YOU. THERE IS A FALSE FILE MISSING THE REQUIRED PROGRAMMING LINE FOR THE DNA CODE. GIVE THIS FALSE PROGRAM TO ACE.—CORSAIR

Shotgun removed the Batman cowl and looked at the mayor. "When was the message attached?"

"Two hours, thirty-four minutes, twenty-six seconds before the Love Field bomb exploded. Corsair was in the Williams building keying this information in and was scheduled to leave Love Field at approximately the same time that the explosion took place."

Johnny thought back to a time several years ago when he and Corsair would enter Drug Lord computer nets while they were in the army together. After a Net raid, the assault squads would be air-lifted into the target zone for a rebut.

"Is there a separate file dealing with Fujita here? One that I can download as well as the fake program?"

Shotgun was waiting, his namesake resting in his lap as Ace re-entered the computer room.

"Did you get it?" was all she asked. Her Mini-Uzi was not pointed all that far off line from her ex-husband.

"Sure. I'm ready to blow out of here," he said, standing up. "Let's head back up to the roof." He gestured to Ace to lead the way.

The journey back to the farm where Shotgun's Thunderbird-X was waiting had a few close calls. A Texas Guard air patrol almost spotted them firing the little booster on the gyrocopter while leaving the Williams building. And then another patrol forced them to almost invade the area containing the Meacham Field Municipal Airport in northwestern Fort Worth. Eventually, they landed at about four in the morning.

"Ah, hell. Now we have to tear this sucker down," Shotgun tiredly said, referring to the gyrocopter. He walked over to his car and input his security code into the door handle keypad. Ace, he noticed, was still standing by the gyrocopter, her Uzi submachinegun pointed at him in no uncertain terms this time.

"I knew that this was going to happen, Ace. Yessir, I sure did," he said, shaking his head sadly.

He tossed his interface modem with the disk still inside it, into the front seat. "Tell me before you try to off me; how are you enjoying Japanese society? Especially the one envisioned by Fujita-san?"

"Amazing, a question from you that I don't understand. Will wonders never cease?"

Shotgun kept his ex-wife in sight while double checking that the drum to his Atchison was firmly seated. He already knew what loads were in it. Solid shot that he had switched back in the computer room while waiting for Ace. "Tell me, Shelly, who were you contacting down in the lobby? The Net there didn't have a radio tracking system I could plug into. Was it your lord and master? Via shortwave satellite uplink maybe?"

"You're doing quite well on your own. Just go on with this little drama you're setting up. Otherwise, give me the damn disk and I might be forgiven for letting you live out of this deal. And don't shift that shotgun in my direction anymore."

"You have heart, lady. I'm guessing that you already know that this disk contains information about a germ warfare agent that affects all non-Asians. And that there must be an antidote that Fujita-san has promised you for when it comes time to unleash it on the world. You see, I came across this very interesting file about your current main man. It was fun reading. A powerful corporate executive getting into politics now. But he has this dream of a new Japanese Empire. Reading his file made me think about all those fictional stories of little tin plate South American dictators who sheltered the Nazis after Dub'lyoo Dub'lyoo Two. The long awaited, and hoped for rise of the Fourth Reich. But—from Japan?"

"Just how do you fit into his plans for the future, Shelly? He picked you up on the white slave market or what? Was that how you got your mind wiped? Or was that after you joined his organization?"

"Oh shut up! Nosy little bastard, aren't you? I was on a job that indeed dealt with white slavery. But my cover was blown before I could get away. It just so happened that Fujita was in the market for a concubine. He made me an offer I just could not refuse. A concubine/solo. I go around with him doing my regular work and then afterwards, let him have sex with me."

"Don't tell me you've developed the Alpha Male complex? Being attracted to the most powerful male that is around at the moment?"

"I can understand you thinking that way. Now, remove that chip from your interface modem. Leave it on the roof and back away from the car. And leave your shotgun on the roof as well."

"No way. A woman who can blow away an entire lunar dome isn't going to get access to this vehicle."

Before she could put a mask on her emotions, Johnny caught a quite genuine look of surprise cross her face. "How—how could you possibly link me to doing something like that?" she asked.

"Just be speaking up—either way, you confirmed that you are the one responsible for the job. While in the Net, as no doubt you are becoming quite aware of now, I happened to come across some very good information about your boss and his business. I've told you about his plans. And both of us know that he now has the power base to take control of Japan. But this germ warfare project leaked out and the other nations of the world have managed to steal the formula and are conducting research on it up on the moon—or they were before you put a damper on things. To prevent the ESA member nations and the United States from stopping him, Fujita sent you up

there to destroy their biolabs. Amazing that Mitsu also had a joint development lab located within that very same dome. Am I on track so far?"

Ace's only answer was to pull the trigger on her submachinegun. Shotgun ducked behind the fender of his car barely in time, his Atchison ready. After counting to three, he popped up and let loose with two rounds. Ace wasn't waiting around to be a target. She had disappeared into the tall brush and weeds between the shed and the ruins of the farmhouse.

Another hail of bullets showered him in sparks from the armor body of his car. The fire was coming from the tree line going down to the lake. He mumbled to himself, "Damn. She also has bionic legs." He got down on his belly and crawled over to the shed, thinking along the way about what Shelly had turned into. Persons who had too many bionic and cybernetic implants began to suffer from cyberpsychosis. They began to lose empathy with Humanity.

Shotgun was without his helmet now. He couldn't use the infra-red tracking without it. He finally reached the side of the shed and leaned back up against it, scanning from left to right. Nothing. "Where is she now?" he subvocalized.

A sudden bang and sheet metal siding gave way to a feminine arm punching through and trying to grab him around the neck. A quick combat roll and he was up and firing. A scream of rage sounded from the other side of the wall. The arm, flesh ripped and bleeding from punching through the wall, now showed the chrome metal underneath. Another crash and bang rent the wall and Shelly "Ace" Townsend sprang through the jagged gap in the shed.

Johnny knew that he couldn't penetrate her chest armor, so he fired at his head to stop her charge. Even decapitating her with a shotgun blast did not halt her charge, which knocked the wind completely out of him. What used to be a woman, his wife, and lover, turned into a cyberkiller by one Sho Fujita, was dead.

And one day, Johnny thought, he will be dead by my own hand.

He laid under the bleeding body till way past dawn. Tears rolled down his face. There wasn't much blood sweeping from her body. Only her head and torso were original parts. All the rest was bionics and body armor covered with living flesh. Johnny Gibson decided that he didn't want to know when Shelly had gone over the cyberpsychosis edge.

Under the front seat was an entrenching tool that he used to dig her grave. Enough boards were around to make a cross. While digging, he thought about the good times the two of them had when they first married. Plans for the future that never came about. About living in the future space colonies that were just starting to be built. Of raising a family out there. Away from the cesspool that the Earth was becoming. How world events robbed them of their dreams.

Once the task was done, Johnny stared out towards the western horizon, seeing beyond to a place where one Sho Fujita planned to rule someday. And of planning a very different future for that not so honorable gentleman.

One year later (translated from Osaka Newspaper obituary column)—

"The Honorable Sho Fujita, chairman of Mitsu, Inc., was found yesterday evening at home... He was discovered by a household guard in his study where Fujita was relaxing with a cyberdeck... Death has been ruled as an accident..." ■

The *Bunker Hill* class cruiser is one of the oldest classes in the ASF inventory and some have been active in the conflicts since 2300. The first keel of the class was laid in the Rockwell Shipyards, orbiting Luna proper, in 2241 and all ships in the class were named after battles of America's eighteenth century war of independence and the war of 1812. The class was the largest ship in the ASF fleet at the time of construction and was designed with maximum survivability in mind. The ship has an incredible amount of armor for a ship of its size. The reasons for this were that the first vessels produced did not carry missiles and were built to withstand broadside energy attacks. The ASF has been building the *Bunker Hill* class cruiser for forty years at the rate of about one every two years. Although the ship was a sound design, the *Oriskany CG-24* was the last ship built, because of the construction program for the new *Kennedy* class cruisers, which began in 2285.

Since most of the ships have had limited usage over the years, the majority of them were mothballed shortly after construction for the ready reserve fleet or sold to other governments after a few years of use. The class is presently in use in the Australian, Brazilian, Azanian, Japanese, and of course the American fleets. Texas and Canada are expected to purchase one each for their own use in fiscal year 2302.

The ship itself is 103 meters long with the rotational arc of the habitats measuring 54 meters in diameter. The stern of the ship contains an old military 75 megawatt MHD turbine and a 75 megawatt stutterwarp drive, also old military. The vessel carries 11,250 tons of fuel, which takes up nearly two thirds of the vessel's volume. Even so, at full power this is only enough for fourteen days of operations.

The crew consists of 55 ship's personnel and 100 troops. The crew lives in two spin capsules amidships which contain the berthing, dining and living spaces. The spaces are fairly cramped since only 25 cubic meters are allotted per person. However, the troops are only carried for boarding missions and are not normally carried on board. The bow of the ship contains the bridge and the sensor equipment. The mid section holds the TAC, troop locker and cargo bay. The cargo bay

THE Bunker Hill

AN ASF WARSHIP DESIGN

can hold up to 2982 cubic meters and is primarily used for stowage of the marine equipment such as walkers or possibly even a small lander.

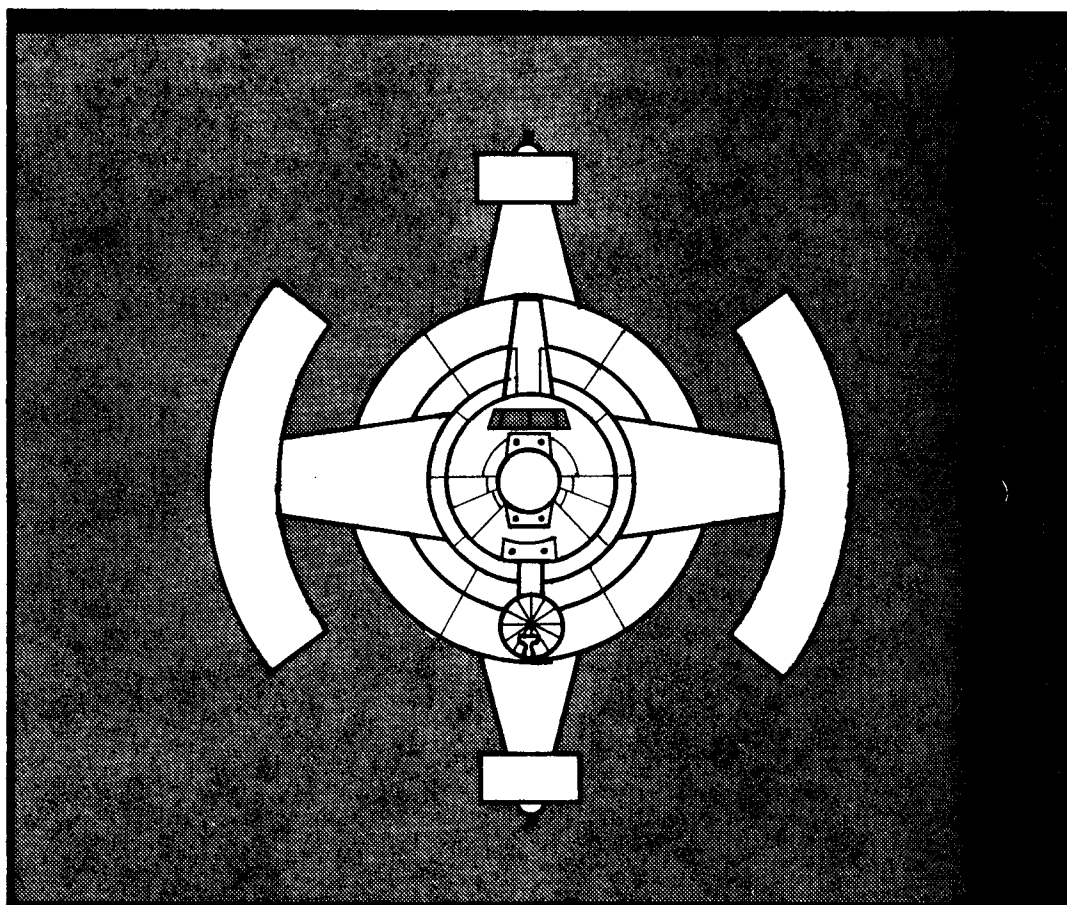
The majority of the ship's main weapons are mounted at the ends of two large pylons mounted on the aft end of the vessel. Each vessel has eleven Hyde Dynamics EAA 1000 lasers mounted in jack turrets, three bow mounted and four in each pylon. Of the eight pylon-mounted lasers, three face port, three face starboard, and the remaining two face aft. Vessels hull numbered 04 through 09 were classified as gun cruisers (CA's), because they carried no missiles. None of those vessels remain in service. The follow on cruisers, hulls 10 through 24, carry missiles and drones mounted on their pylons and are classified as guided missile cruisers (CG's).

The ships in the American and Australian fleets have two SIM-14 packs and one HD-5 drone on each pylon. The Brazilian Navy has two AAS-4 packs (only one in each pylon due to the larger size of the missiles) and two French Voir class sensor drones. The Azanian and Japanese Navies both utilize two French Ritage-2 missile packs, one per pylon, but these leave no room for the drones. The drones, French Vue Class, are carried in the cargo bay. The ship's troops are used to launch the probes.

The current status of all *Bunker Hill* class cruisers is listed below along with the ship's statistics list.

U.S.S. Bunker Hill CA-04

Commissioned: 2241. In service: 2241-2256. Decommissioned 2258. Converted to museum at L4 2260.



Hill Class Cruiser

DESIGN BY MICHAEL BOLDA

U.S.S. Concord CA-05

Commissioned: 2243. In service: 2243-2268. Decommissioned: 2268. Sold for scrap to Trilon 2268.

U.S.S. Bennington CA-06

Commissioned: 2245. In service: 2246-2248? Lost in transit to King from New Melbourne. Probably destroyed.

U.S.S. Newtown CA-07

Commissioned: 2247. In service: 2248-2275. Decommissioned: 2275. Sold for scrap to MidTech 2276.

U.S.S. Wilmington CA-08

Commissioned: 2249. In service: 2250-2278. Destroyed while touring Chinese Arm. Burned up over Hunjiang. Possible terrorist related.

U.S.S. Germantown CA-09

Commissioned: 2250. In service:

2250-2253. Suffered engine failure and burned up over Earth 2253.

U.S.S. Savannah CG-10

Commissioned: 2252. In service: 2252-2260. Sold to Brazil 2261. Recommissioned: Marcilio Dias CG-04 2270.

U.S.S. Charleston CG-11

Commissioned: 2255. In service: 2256-2260. Suffered fire damage in 2251 during construction. Mothballed 2260. Sold to Azania 2280. Recommissioned: Joseph Mbutuo CG-1 2281.

U.S.S. Long Island CG-12

Commissioned: 2254. In service: 2254-2294. Sold as scrap to Trilon 2295.

U.S.S. Lake Champlain CG-13

Commissioned: 2260. In service:

2260-2270. Mothballed 2271. Ready reserve fleet. Under consideration for purchase by Texas.

U.S.S. White Plains CG-14

Commissioned: 2262. In service: 2262-2270. Mothballed 2270. Sold to Australia 2295. Recommissioned H.M.S. Perth CG-101 2296.

U.S.S. Trenton CG-15

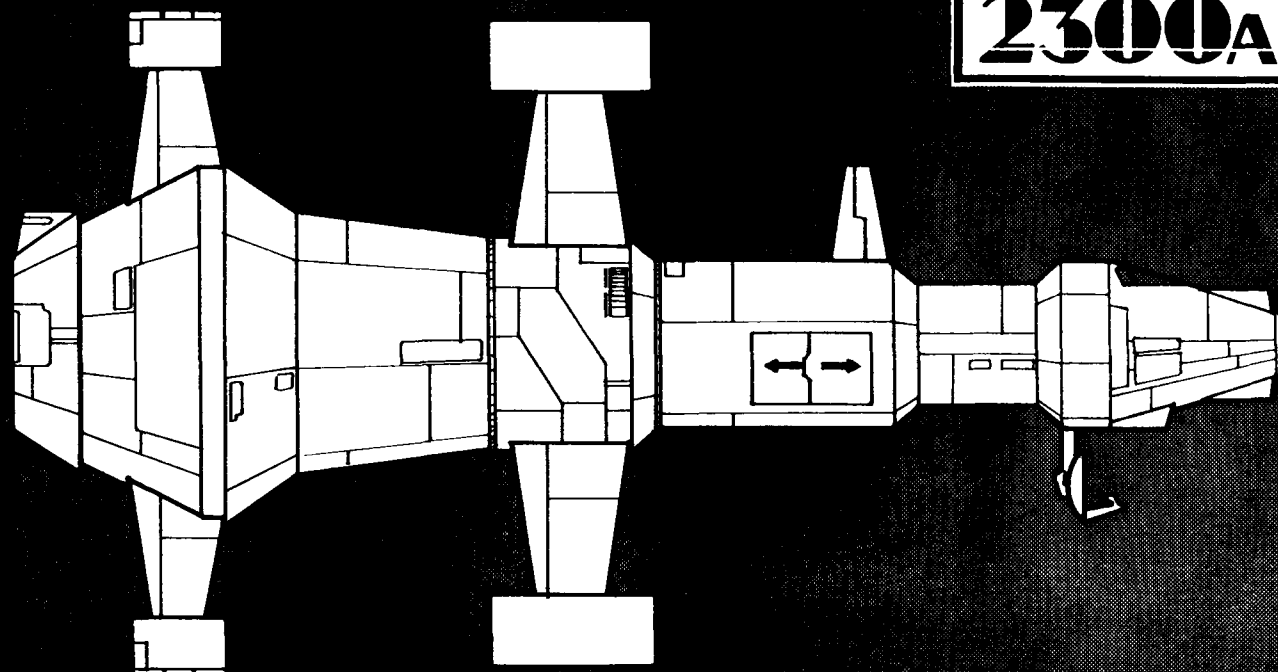
Commissioned: 2264. In service: 2264-2267. Mothballed 2268. Under consideration for purchase by Canada.

U.S.S. Princeton CG-16

Commissioned: 2266. In service: 2267-2277. Sold to Japan 2278. Recommissioned: Hirohito CG-10 2282.

U.S.S. Ticonderoga CG-17

Commissioned: 2267. In service:



2300AD

2268–2278. Mothballed 2278–2299. Recommissioned 2299–present. Stationed in King system. Conducts anti-piracy operations.

U.S.S. Saratoga CG–18

Commissioned: 2269. In service: 2270–2274. Reserve status. Damaged while running German blockade 2274. Recommissioned 2300. Deployed to French Arm against the Kafers.

U.S.S. King's Mountain CG–19

Commissioned: 2270. In service: 2270–2275. Damaged docking with L4 station 2275. Mothballed 2280. Ready reserve fleet.

U.S.S. Yorktown CG–20

Commissioned: 2272. In service: 2272–2280. Mothballed 2280. Reserve fleet 2280–present. Awaiting funds for recommissioning.

U.S.S. Cowpens CG–21

Commissioned: 2276. In service: 2277–2302. Destroyed at the Battle of Beowulf. All hands lost.

U.S.S. Lexington CG–22

Commissioned: 2278. In service:

2278–present. Stationed King system. Serves as garrison ship.

U.S.S. Valley Forge CG–23

Commissioned: 2279. In service: 2280–present. Deployed to French Arm against the Kafers.

U.S.S. Oriskany CG–24

Commissioned: 2281. In service: 2282–present. Deployed to Beta Aqualae Cluster surveillance group.

Bunker Hill Class Cruiser

Sensor Package: Navigation Radar, Deep System Scanner, Gravitational Scanner, Active Sensor, Passive Sensor.

Ship's Personnel (Work Stations): Total: 154

Off Bridge: 6/15 (3) Engineering 12 extra damage control personnel, 100 (5) Ship's troops, 2 (2) Medical. Bridge: 8 (4) standard, 4 (2) Computer, 4 (2) Engineering TAC: 1 (1) Active operator, 1 (1) Passive operator, 11 (11) Fire control, 2 (2) Remote pilots.

General Information

Warp Efficiency: 3.82/2.64/2.29, Power Plant: 75MW Old military MHD turbine, Fuel: 11250 tons, Range: (7.7) 36.96/32.06, Mass: 5547, 16797 with fuel, 25794 with cargo and fuel, Cargo capacity: 2982m3, Comfort: 0, Emergency Power: none, Total life support: 160, Solar array: none.

Ship Status Sheet Information:

Movement: 5, Screens: (4) Old military, Radiated Signature: 5, Radial Reflected: 13, Lateral Reflected: 15, Targeting computer: +1, Radial profile: +2, Lateral profile: +5, Armor: 5, Passive Sensors: 12, Active Sensors: 15, Hull Hit Capacity: 550/275/138, Power Plant Hit Capacity: 275/138, TTA's: 11, TAC: Active operator, Passive operated, Fire control (11) Remote pilot (2), Bridge: Captain, Navigator, Communications, Computer (2), Engineering (2), Damage Control: 15 (5 Groups), Ordnance (see text), Crew comfort: 0, Crew quality: 0. ■

Voyages SF 16 Reader Survey

Readers are encouraged to complete the survey below. Either photocopy this form or list the article numbers, with appropriate ratings, on a post card. Rate articles: Excellent-4, Good-3, Fair-2, Poor-1, Not Read-0. Please mail completed survey by October 1, 1991.

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- 2 ____ An Obvious And Current Menace
- 3 ____ Optional Helicopter Rules For BattleTech
- 4 ____ Linkup
- 5 ____ The Bunker Hill Class Cruiser
- 6 ____ The Hunt For Patrick Hersh
- 7 ____ Trouble On DM-738
- 8 ____ Words To Game By
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The New

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War has raged on for years. The front lines sweep back and forth across the ravaged face of Europe. The high-tech ammunition is dwindling. The high-tech equipment is failing, piece by piece, as spare parts and maintenance time evaporate before the march of an endless campaign. The front lines are now held by a few grim and desperate soldiers.

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"WHAT FOOLS WE WERE to allow ourselves to be lulled into a warm sense of security by the events of the late '80s and early '90s. How childlike we were in our trumpeting of the new age of peace, prosperity, and good will. Democracy had come to Europe, and that meant that peace had come to Europe, for democracies never made war on other democracies.

"What utter rot!

"How could we have believed such naive rubbish with the lessons of history so plainly before us? Democracies have *always* made war on other democracies; it has been a fact of life since the earliest democracies flourished in Greece, and warred continuously upon each other.

"How could we have forgotten that in the War of 1812 the two great western democracies made enthusiastic, aggressive war on each other?

"How could we have forgotten that democracies represent the will of the people, and that the will of the people is often for war?

"How could we have forgotten that Hitler was elected?"

Janosz Skrivkin
Chancellor of Croatia
1999



A DREAMS OF STEEL ADVENTURE BY BRAD MADISON

Introduction

This adventure was designed for 3 to 5 players using the **Dreams of Steel** supplement to the *Morpheus RPG*. It can be adapted, however, to any dark future RPG such as *Shadowrun*, *Cyberspace*, *Cyberpunk*, or any science fiction RPG where the GM feels the burning desire to torment his players.

The Setting

The adventure is set in the completely mythical city of Steeltown, one of the six U.S. cities to survive a nuclear exchange with the Soviet Union. It is a vastly overcrowded metropolis, teeming with violent street gangs, power-hungry crime lords, desperate legions of homeless people, and a brutal police force determined to keep them all in check. Twenty years have passed since "the Great Nuke-Out" and all is not well.

The Problem

Our player characters begin the adven-

ture living in one of the hundreds of apartment complexes which house the lucky majority of Steeltown's citizens. Cramped, over-priced, and offering little in the way of privacy, the apartments are still a vast improvement over living in the streets.

The only problem the PCs have is that they have no money to pay next month's rent. Steeltown's landlords have no mercy towards tenants late with their payments and it should be stressed to the players that life on the streets can only be described as hellish.

The Solution

The solution some players would now arrive at would be "Let's rob a bank!" This should be discouraged by the GM as it would not only screw up the adventure, it would likely get the PCs killed. In fact, any illegal acts should be avoided. The GM should, instead, encourage (or force) the PCs to look for jobs.

Drawing upon personal experiences, the GM should make this search for employ-

ment as humiliating and frustrating as possible. Endless lines of fellow applicants should force the PCs to waste valuable hours just standing in line. Cold-hearted interviewers should ask them embarrassing and insulting questions like: "Would you submit to a full body search?" or, "Have you ever performed, or are you contemplating performing an unnatural sexual act?"

During this time, the GM should allow the PCs numerous dice rolls so they think they actually have a chance of getting one of the jobs for which they are applying. If someone rolls especially well, tell him he's made it to the second interview stage (where, of course, he can bomb out). To allow the players to have a little fun, let them get into a brawl with some of the other applicants and maybe let them trash the Personnel Dept. of the company to which they are applying.

Finally, after about a week, the PCs hear of jobs in the recycling business. They show up at a place called, "Waste Not, Want Not," and walk inside. The first thing they should notice is an absence of other

applicants. The second thing they should notice is the friendliness of the interviewer, Mr. Moore.

Moore tells them the starting salary for the positions for which they are applying is \$150 per week plus 1% of the total value of any goods they bring in. For Steeltown, this is pretty good. The downside is that they won't be bringing in regular garbage for recycling, they'll be bringing in human corpses.

As disgusting as this may seem, the proper disposal of the dead is vital to the well-being of the city. Not only does it prevent the possible spread of diseases, but the corpses, once properly prepared, are used as fertilizer on the fields of the huge city-owned farms which feed the city. Additionally, the organs of the fresher corpses can be harvested and transplanted to other citizens who are victims of the cancer epidemic which continues to rage due to the radioactive dust which periodically blows in from other parts of what used to be the U.S. The base rate for corpses is ten cents per pound. If a corpse is less than an hour old and has organs which can be harvested, the bonus is five dollars per usable organ.

If the PCs accept the job, they are told to report to work tomorrow morning at 6:00 am (and given 20 dream points).

In the early morning darkness, the PCs arrive at WNNW to begin their first shift. They are supplied with kevlar vests, identical coveralls and firearms. The necessity of these items, which, incidentally, have to be returned at the end of the shift, will become obvious later in the day. They also meet their crew chief, Big Al Hrobosky. Al is a thickly-built, sturdy looking individual with a full black beard and long black hair. He wears the standard WNNW coveralls and an ancient St. Louis Cardinals baseball cap. Al resembles nothing so much as an unholy fusion of a caveman and Blackbeard the Pirate.

Al leads his newly-outfitted crew down to their "Waste Reclamation Vehicle," a modified dump truck with a battered scoop on the front. The vehicle, nicknamed Bulldog, is pockmarked with dozens of bullet holes, has no window glass, and has each window screened with steel bars. "Keeps out grenades," Al explains.

Learning the recycling business turns out to be somewhat more complex than the PCs probably first imagine. Handling the stinking, swollen bodies of the dead isn't really the hard part of the job. The hard part is figuring out how to avoid becoming one of the stinking, swollen dead. This is not an easy task, as our PCs will quickly learn.

The recycling trade in Steeltown is a for-profit industry, and as such it features all of the characteristics profit-making industries have featured since the development of the free enterprise system of economics. The characteristic we are most concerned with is competition. As if homicidal street gangs, trigger-happy cops and the random gun-toting psychopath didn't make the city dangerous enough, the fierce competition between the various recycling firms makes it downright unhealthy for our PCs.

At this point, the GM should allow the PCs to do their jobs and make some honest money. For kicks you can have them ambushed by competitors, or just attacked by a street gang. Bribing the cops to harass the competition is a common tactic in the recycling industry. If a PC thinks to do this, give him 50 dream points. As a plot twist, have the PCs run afoul of some gang that demands a toll be paid before they allow the group to pass. Remember that any injury or death to a gang member will earn the PCs that gang's wrath until the "debt" is repayed. Another possibility is to have a cop harass them unmercifully, keeping them from doing their jobs and ticketing them for illegal parking or speeding. Any violence done a policeman will have dire consequences.

GMs should feel free, indeed obligated, to make the PC's lives as miserable as possible.

As a final note, some gamers (and we know who you are) will decide to create their own supply of cadavers by running around murdering people. The GM should try to discourage this, but if necessary, have the PCs' actions witnessed by an innocent bystander or a cop. Better yet, have one of their victims be a street gang member and have the surviving gang members hunt the PCs relentlessly, even breaking into their apartment to try and kill them.

To those players who roleplay the best, give 30 DPs. Everyone else should receive 20 DPs.

The Plot Twist

As if the PCs weren't having enough fun, we now come to the main part of the adventure.

One day, while the PCs are out working, they hear of the disappearance of Patrick Hersh, the 17-year-old son of prominent businessman J. Leno Hersh. The young man's worried parents are offering a \$10,000 reward to the person or persons who bring back their son ALIVE. While it may not seem like much to us, \$10,000 is a fortune in Steeltown. It can buy the PCs

virtually anything from a rent-free condo, to a van and passage out of the city, to lots of guns and hired thugs to use them. But mainly it would mean they could quit their jobs.

Unfortunately, with the size of the reward, every street punk, homeless person, gangster, and cop in Steeltown is out combing the streets with the hope of striking it rich. With all this competition, it's unlikely the PCs will be fortunate enough to stumble across the kid and claim the reward, but for Waste Not, Want Not the "Hunt for Patrick Hersh" is turning into a bonanza. The Evening News reports the daily body count as gangs of searchers run into other gangs of searchers and the inevitable firefight erupts. The PCs are kept busy just picking up the remains.

It is at this point that the GM can allow the players complete freedom of action. They can continue working at their jobs, or more likely, they'll decide to try and find Patrick Hersh themselves. Beyond this, it would be difficult to predict what course of action a group of players might take. They'll probably try to conduct an investigation of their own and run around questioning people who might have known Patrick and generally making a nuisance of themselves. With this in mind, it might be a good idea to have some facts and NPCs ready to help or hinder them in their quest.

Patrick Hersh was a skinny, pimply-faced young man with long, brownish-blond hair. Even though his parents were wealthy, he didn't fit in with his affluent classmates at Westwood Academy, the private school his parents put him in at the beginning of the school year. He had no girlfriend and those who knew him say he generally kept to himself. The one memorable aspect of Patrick was his fascination with phrenology.

Snooping around Westwood should be made difficult for the PCs, as the rich generally have strict security measures which keep away strangers (especially poor strangers) and the police have already questioned the students and faculty extensively. For the PCs, such questioning is virtually a waste of time. The only facts of value they come away with are his phrenology hobby and the name of his old school: John Wayne Memorial High.

At John Wayne, which is located in the John Wayne Apartment Complex in southern Steeltown, the PCs can find (with difficulty) a few people who say they were Patrick's friends and even a skinny girl who says she dated him a few times last year. The friends don't know anything of value, but the girl does. Unfortunately, she isn't

about to reveal what she knows to the PCs or anyone else. She's convinced the police that she hasn't seen Patrick in almost a year and is equally convincing to the PCs. However, if they somehow see through the deception and follow her, she'll lead them to the "Ye Olde Phrenology Shoppe and Beauty Salon" located near the Jack Lambert Apartment Complex.

At the Shoppe, they meet Master Nick, the head phrenologist and hairdresser, who refuses to give them any information until he's given them a shampoo and set and felt the bumps on their heads.

Nick says Patrick has fallen in with a band of radical phrenologists who want to

overthrow the city government and use the science of phrenology to select more capable leaders. He doesn't know how they plan to do this, but can give the group the names and addresses of two men who might know more.

The apartments of the men are in two separate complexes. To gain access to the residential levels of these complexes, the PCs must have Credit/Identification (CID) cards coded for those specific levels. Security will not grant unescorted access to anyone without a properly coded CID card. The PCs will have to rely on their wits and intelligence to get by the security guards.

If they can get to the residential levels

of each complex, they will find that neither man is home and it appears they've been gone for several days. Aside from numerous books on phrenology and politics, the only real clue they find is in the apartment of the second man. Wadded up in a wastebasket is a hand-drawn map of the interior of a building. There are names written across what appear to be entrances to a large room. The words, "soundstage," "cameras," and "audience" can lead the PCs to only one conclusion: This group of madmen is going to take over the TV station!

For many in Steeltown, watching television is the only real pleasure they get. Old reruns of "Gilligan's Island" or "The

STATS FOR TYPICAL STEELTOWN NPCs, WEAPONS, & DEFENSES

Police Officer (typical patrolman)

Defense: MD=5 Kevlar Vest

Attack: AV=2 Nightstick
DV=2

Attack: AV=3 Small Handgun
DV=2
Range=6
Rounds=varies with type

Hit Points=10
Speed=2

Street Punk

Defense: MD=2 Light Armor

Attack: AV=3 Knife
DV=1

Hit Points=10
Speed=2

The average Steeltown apartment dweller will have no armor, and because no weapons are allowed inside the complexes, will have no weapons either. If they are encountered outside the complexes, they will probably have some sort of protection on them.

The typical homeless person might have a club or a crude knife for a weapon and maybe the several layers of ragged clothing usually wear might have an MD (Material Defense) of 1.

Below are more weapons and defenses and their stats.

WEAPON	AV	DV	RANGE	AMMO	SPECIAL
Spear	3	1	4	NA	NA
Rock or Brick	2	1	4	NA	NA
Large Handgun	6	4	6	varies	NA
Shotgun	3	5	6	varies	NA
Submachinegun	10	5	20	varies	1" area
Assault Rifle	20	10	40	varies	1" area and 1" knockback
Hand Grenade	5	3	4	varies	1" area and 1" knockback

DEFENSE	MATERIAL DEFENSE	HIT POINTS
Wooden Door	5	5
Brick Wall	7	15
Average Car Door	10	10

Note: When a defense's Hit Points are reduced to zero, the object is assumed to be so shot-up that it can no longer render effective cover for the combatant.

Facts of Life™ remind them of a time when life was better: when food was cheap and plentiful; when people could get in their cars and travel across the country without having to worry about radiation or killer mutants — when life was worth living. To have someone even indirectly threaten those old tapes should fill the PCs with horror. To have their chance at \$10,000 ruined by a bunch of nuts should fill them with even more horror.

Here again, the PCs will have to make some sort of plan as to their course of action, and the GM will have to be flexible enough to accommodate whatever crackpot scheme they come up with.

The Happy Ending?

Unless their actions change things, the following events will take place:

1. The Phrenologists for Better Government will attempt to take over the TV station at 6 pm the following day.

2. Patrick Hersh is among the nine armed men and will go on live TV to speak for the group as his face is now instantly recognizable to the citizens of Steeltown.

3. The group demands the present city government resign and be replaced by

leaders which have been chosen using the science of phrenology. PBG threatens to destroy all the old movies and TV shows in the station's vault unless their demands are met.

4. Hundreds of police and thousands of common citizens swarm around the TV station. Some want PBG's demands met, others want to save the videotapes, most just want to see a good show.

5. All hell breaks loose as the police rush the station, the giant Molotov cocktail the phrenologists brought sets fire to the entire building and the mob riots.

Hopefully, the PCs will have intervened will before these events occur.

In my mind's eye, I see the PCs taking their dump truck from work to the TV station and waiting for the phrenologists to show up. Then, grabbing the kid (which should be fairly easy since the phrenologists are armed only with handguns, a couple of old rifles and a 25 gallon canister of gasoline) and making a run for the reward. Just when they think they're clear, a competing recycling firm, which has harassed our PCs all game long, makes another appearance in their own dump truck. They know the PCs have the kid and want him for themselves. A running gun

battle/dump truck chase takes place in the middle of Steeltown. Of course, this is just one outcome of the adventure. There can be many others and I hope yours is just as much fun.

The Survival Bonus for the adventure is 100 points. Additional Dream Points can be given to the PCs as the GM sees fit. ■

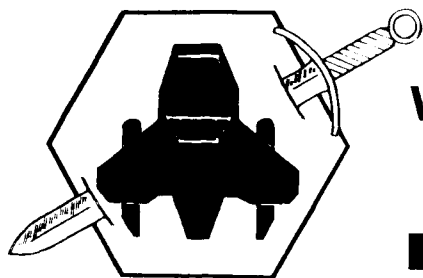
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TYPICAL LASER PISTOLS

GARY A. KALIN

The laser pistol is one of the favorite personal weapons in science fiction. Like the six-shooter of the old west, the laser pistol is strapped onto the legs of our heroes and heroines to deal out justice in the lawless frontier of outer space.

The following data is for low and high technology laser pistols as used with some of the more popular games.

STAR TREK: THE ROLE PLAYING GAME

The development of the phaser almost completely ended the demand for hand laser pistols in the Federation. Only their low cost and simple design keeps them on the personal weapon market. Only private citizens or low technology civilizations will have hand laser pistols. Most other spacefaring civilizations either do not allow personal armaments for private citizens or use other weapon technology.

WEAPON	DAM	P.B.	S	M	L	F	AMMO/POWER	GRAZE	DRAIN
Low-tech Laser	40	1	2-5	6-12	13-26	27-60	50 or 200	30	1
High-tech Laser	90	1	2-16	17-42	43-80	81-160	50	20	1

MEKTON II

The laser pistol uses a pure beam of coherent light, unlike the particle beam energy pistols described in the game. The laser pistol has the advantage of firing two shots per game turn. The increased performance is offset by the increase in weight and size.

WEAPON	DAMAGE	SHOTS	BV	WA	WT	COST	RANGE
Low-tech laser	1-10 variable	20	2	+2	8 kg	500 cr	100 hexs
High-tech laser	1-20 variable	40	2	+3	6 kg	700 cr	150 hexs

HIGH COLONIES

The low-tech laser pistol was the forerunner to the typical energy pistol found in the game. The need for a smaller power source spurred the development of a smaller pistol with more power. The major drawback is the increased weight.

WEAPON	RANGE			AP VALUE			MODE			WEIGHT
	S	M	L	S	M	L	SF	SB	LB	
Low-tech laser	4	8	16	4	3	2	1	2	0	5.5
High-tech laser	6	12	32	6	5	3	1	2	3	5

STAR WARS: THE HOLE PLAYING GAME

The technology of *Star Wars* is very advanced. The low-tech laser pistol would be very rare. Its use would have peaked over 100 years ago. The high-tech laser pistol would have been its replacement, but its design is over 50 years old. Players and NPCs from real backwater planets could be armed with pistols like these.

WEAPON	DAMAGE	SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG
Low-tech laser	2D	3-4	5-8	9-12
High-tech laser	2D+1	3-6	7-14	15-30

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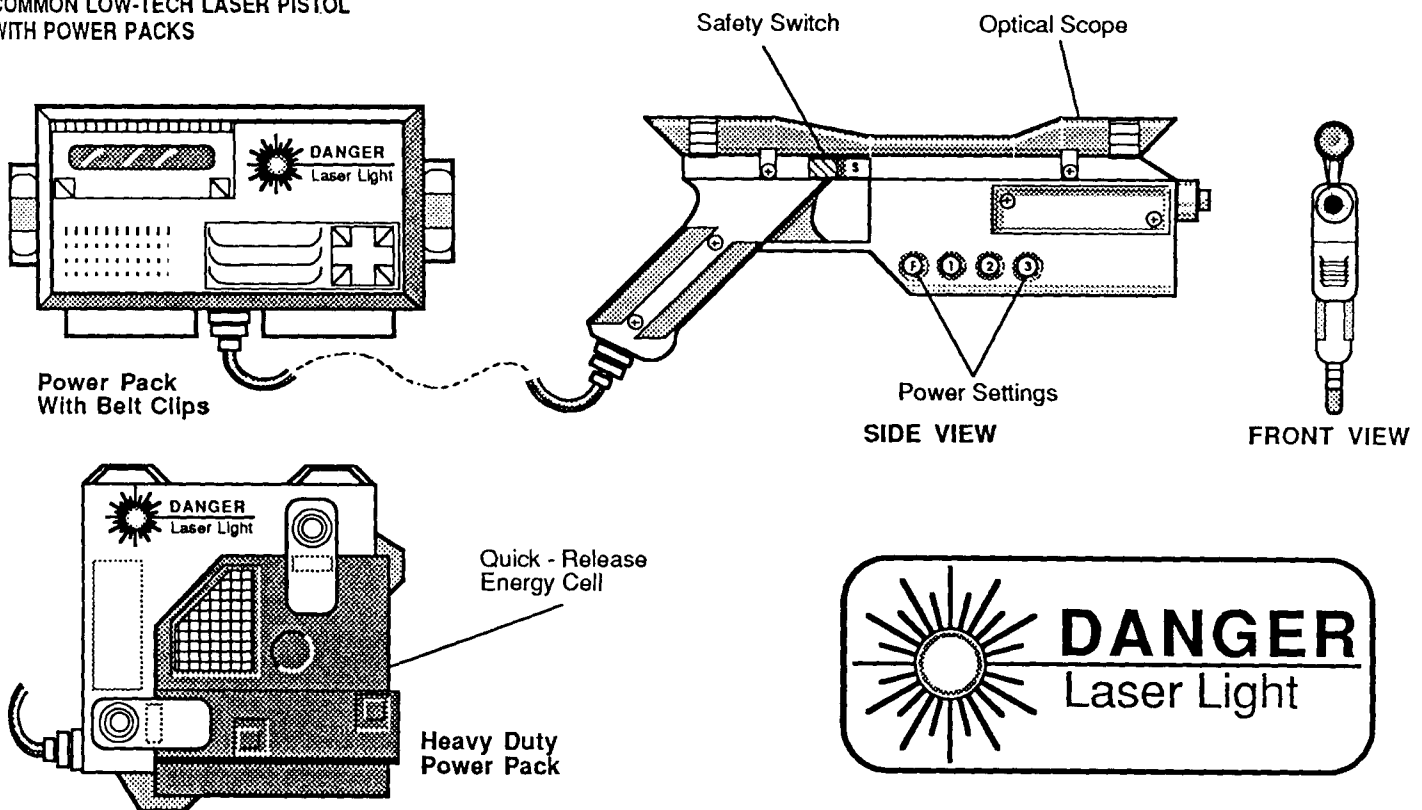
TYPICAL LASER PISTOLS

by Gary A. Kalin

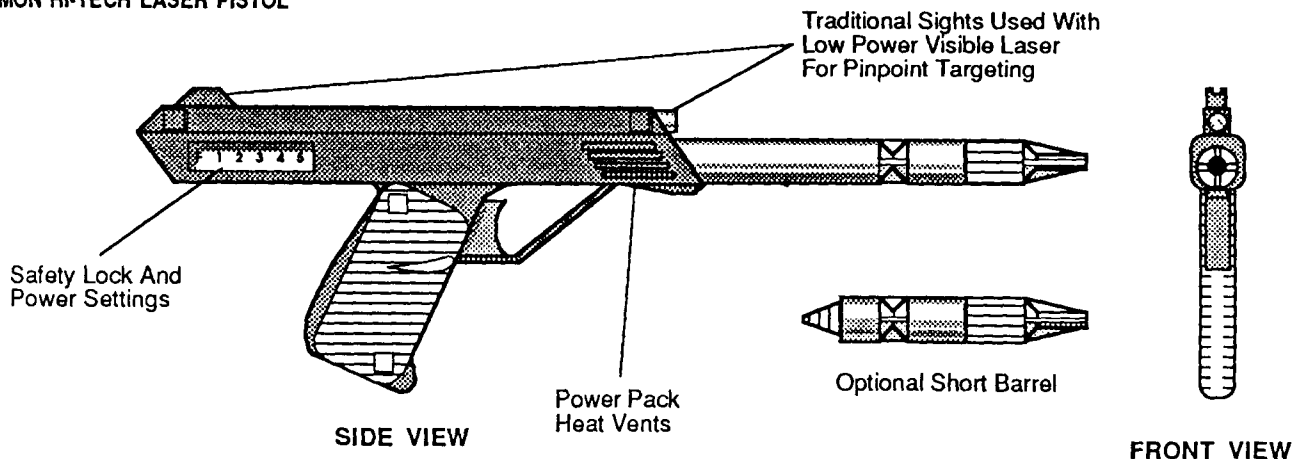
The laser beam was one of the first energy weapons to be developed. The laser pistol on the other hand, was one of the last applications for laser beam weapon technology. Almost all low-tech laser pistols need a separate power pack or cell due to the large power drain and the size of a power source that will fit into a pistol frame.

When the problem of power pack size was solved, the hi-tech laser pistol became one of the preferred weapons. Many different sizes and types of laser pistols can be found. Two of the more common types are shown.

COMMON LOW-TECH LASER PISTOL WITH POWER PACKS



COMMON HI-TECH LASER PISTOL



"Most people *can't* think, most of the remainder *won't* think, the small fraction who *do* think mostly can't do it very well. The extremely tiny fraction who think regularly, accurately, creatively, and without self-delusion -- in the long run these are the only people who count." -- Lazarus Long

I found myself in the extremely happy position of having found, not one, but two writers who come from that tiny fraction, as well as several others who are just consistently good. Summer's generally the season one thinks of doing something besides curling up with a good book, I know. Still, I think you'll find yourself not begrudging the time spent with most of these.

Warbirds

R. M. Meluch. 1989 Signet SF. 253 pp.

If you read only two books this summer, let this be one of them! I found myself totally captured in the first paragraph and not wanting to stop, even when it was time to go to work, eat or sleep. *This* is truly powerful writing at its finest. I kid you not. Enough "hard" science to keep the most stalwart Niven fan in ecstasies; Air Ops and combat that is the finest I've ever come across; a razor keen sense of insight on human natures; all rolled into a relentless narrative.

So, after all that, you might ask, "Well, what's it about?" It's about two people, and three Peoples. It's about wars, air/space craft and some of the design considerations that should go into them; it's a love story worthy of *The Bard*, with a happier ending than most of his tales. It's about three worlds in one solar system: Tannia, Erde and Occo; jointly colonized 192 years prior. Of them, only Tannia and Erde maintained contact, generally by warring upon each other. Eventually Tannia defeated Erde and then spent nearly twenty years incorporating the Erdans into their society as teachers, attempting to regain the Terran heritage they lost but Erde retained. Anton Norveldt, of Erde, is a man with a dark secret from the war, who has tried to live a quiet, retiring life on Tannia as a professor of the Classics. That was before he met Maggie, a woman young enough to be, if not his daughter, his *very* younger sister. His love for her, and the less-than-peaceful resumption of contact with Occo, provide the heart of this fantastically good book. *Scour* your favorite book outlets until you manage a copy, and hang onto it!

Insurrection

David Webber & Steve White. 1990 Baen Books. 408 pp.

This book is number two of those you really should read this summer. If you enjoy well plotted ship-to-ship combat, interesting, diverse and believable human societies and worlds, profound political thought that's presented in a way that is anything *but* boring, then you'll probably enjoy *Insurrection* as much as I did. Generally, when I've read any extraordinary work, I have a real difficult time enjoying whatever I read next. I read *Insurrection* right after finishing *War Birds* and *still* enjoyed it to no end! The writing is clear, concise and well paced. The descriptions of ship-to-ship actions doesn't leave you wondering



WORDS TO GAME BY Jerry Campbell

what happened; yet the "tech" side of the story doesn't overshadow the human side. Largely a work on human freedom, the political thoughts of the writers aren't forced, yet are not so honeyed that you miss them going past. A thought provoking story, particularly nowadays when most of us (at least in the States) are losing more freedoms than we're gaining.

If for some reason you can't get a hold of a copy, Baen Books is very good about sending copies to those who write for them -- and they *don't* charge "S&H" either! Their catalog number for *Insurrection* is: 72024-4. Send \$4.50 to: Baen Books, P.O. Box 1403, Riverdale NY 10471.

Surface Action

David Drake. 1990 Ace SF. 236 pp.

David Drake is probably best known for his "Hammer's Slammers" series of future armored vehicle combat. *Surface Action*, while still a fast-paced combat SF tale, is a bit different from Drake's other stories.

First off, all the action is on Venus, a terraformed Venus, where the combatants are only marginally more deadly than the flora and fauna. Anybody wanting to game a *really* hostile planet, here you go! Secondly, there are no tanks! This one is all about Wet Navy ships and most of the tech isn't all that far gone from what we have today; a generation or two at the most.

Still, all the guys with guns are mercs, and the battles are written from an individual type viewpoint, lest the reader forget that war is, in the final analysis, very gory, icky, and damned painful for those involved; which is one of the things that makes Drake's stories so good; they're "real."

Zone Yellow

Keith Laumer. 1990 Baen Books. 247 pp.

Hmmm... This book's cover touts itself as ***Starring Brion Bayard*** Well big, whoopin' deal! I suppose there're many fans of Mr. Laumer's *Imperium* series, but I'm not one of them and this book sure hasn't done anything to convert me. Theoretically, this is a story of Earth being

invaded by sentient rats from a parallel universe. Instead, it winds up being a rambling, disjointed hodgepodge of muddily described scenes, flat characters, weak jokes punctuated with bouts of untranslated Swedish.

I normally expect quality from Baen Books, which is why I bought this book. It appears they were trying to go on the strength of Keith Laumer's name instead of the quality of writing. Personally, I've never believed that Mr. Laumer has written anything good outside of his *Bolo* works. I still feel that way.

Clarke County, Space

Allen Steele. 1990 Ace SF. 231 pp.

Allen Steele is going to be one of those authors who, in years to come, is going to be spoken of as one of "greats" of the SF field. Despite the mildly corny title, this is one *fun* read! Rather akin to Heinlein's *The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress* in its "flavor," *Clarke County* is about the first L-5 colony and some of the, ahh... different types that might choose to inhabit it. A couple of well-paced mystery/action sub-plots (perfect for you 007 fans) and an overall air of believability that comes from having put considerable thought and research into getting the tech parts "right," make this a story to truly enjoy. The "Church of Elvis" angle is fun, too! I plan to try and find Mr. Steele's earlier work, *Orbital Decay*, just to see if it's as good as this one. The only fault? The book really does need a page or two of line drawings/maps to clarify the locations of some of the scenes, as well as the overall looks of the colony.

*** Oldies***

While you're rummaging through the musty recesses of your favorite library or used book store, keep your eyes peeled for these classics!

Space Viking

H. Beam Piper. 1963 Ace Books. 243 pp.

Now, my personal copy is so old that it shows a price of \$1.95. Old, indeed! However, this gem of Piper's has seen reprint a few times since his death and shouldn't be too difficult to locate. The story line revolves around a group of "fringe" worlds that managed to not only survive, but actually created a means of prospering after the dissolution of the interstellar civilization they once were a part of. What you don't immediately realize until you're well into this wholly captivating tale is that you're being given both a history lesson *and* a "down and dirty" short course in Poly-Sci! The blending of technologies and Piper's ideas on how FTL ships might appear are enough to get any GM's brain buzzing. A keeper.

Decision At Doona

Anne McCaffery. 1983 Del Ray SF. 245 pp.

Two races. One, Earth Human; the other, Canid. Both populating increasingly crowded worlds and needing more room. Enter the world called Doona. Entirely suitable to both species, yet neither group can afford to engage in a war over it. Is peaceful co-existence possible? A charming tale in which the "humane" don't always need clothes. My copy is the eleventh printing; I'm certain it's gone beyond that now. ■

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MegaTraveller: Stealth Aircraft; Finders, Inc. **Star Wars:** Hide And Go Seek; Long Term Star Wars; Guide To Blaster Weapons. **Star Trek:** S-16 Patrol Shuttle. **Reviews:** Morpheus; Cyberspace; Armored Assault.

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Unofficial Combat Errata for the Palladium RPG System. **Shadowrun:** The Go-Betweens. **Star Wars:** Gunsmiths; Effects of Wounds. **MegaTraveller:** Solomani Space Fighters; Corsair Contention. **Gurps Auto-duel:** Case of the Haunted Car. **2300 AD:** Encounter at Hesperus. **Reviews:** Rifts; Reich Star; Attack of the Humans; Gurps Cyberpunk.

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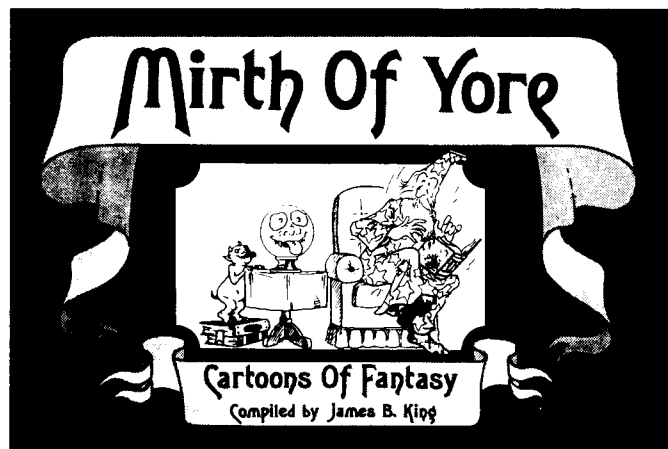
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RATINGS

4 = Excellent
2 = Fair3 = Good
1 = Poor

Dark Conspiracy

336 page rule book. \$22.

Game Design: Lester W. Smith. **Development:** Frank Chadwick, Loren K. Wiseman, Julia Martin. **Front Cover:** Larry Elmore. **Back Cover:** Dell Harris. **Interior Art:** Janet Aulisio, Timothy Bradstreet, Steve Bryant, Paul Daly, Elizabeth Danforth, Amy Doubet, Larry Elmore, LaMont Fullerton, Earl Geier, Dell Harris, Rick Harris, April Lee, David Martin, Ellisa Martin, Timothy Truman, Kirk Wescom.

Publisher: GDW Games, PO Box 1646, Blooming IL 61702-1646

Dark Conspiracy is GDW's entry into the horror gaming market, joining the ranks of *Chill*, *Vampire*, and of course, the venerable *Call of Cthulu*.

As far as I can figure from the background given in the monstrous rulebook, human civilization of the future has deteriorated due to a crippling economic depression, a shortage of wealth that has caused governments to lose authority and power. As expected, the private sector moved into the power void and soon established a sort of economic tyranny of the sort seen in most cyberpunk genre universes: The companies own everything and the common man is less than a cipher. While corporate executives live in splendor and wealth, their guards keep away the starving and homeless which corporate policies have created. Cities can't afford to hire police to patrol their areas; law has eroded into a

sort of corporate feudalism—those areas that can afford to hire police have them, and those that can't don't. Huge areas of the gigantic metropolises are patrolled by gangs that control through terror and raw firepower.

Technology has not marched forward; rather, it's gone off at an angle. Retro-40s is the style; art-deco is back. Cars are fuel-snooting, metal monsters with running boards...and computer-controlled engines under the hood. Computers still rule, but they have metal-key keyboards, like old typewriters (or the computers in Max Headroom: Twenty Minutes into the Future). Telephones are tough old plastic AT&T models, indestructible instead of shoddy. Sure, there are spaceships and microchips, but the look of the future is the look of the past.

As if this wasn't bad enough, strange things have begun to happen, events that sound like they were lifted from tabloid headlines (more on that later). Actual monsters are seen, in the cities and in the corporate-farmed countryside. The difference is that these monsters leave carcasses when pumped full of lead, corpses suitable for scientific research. These monsters are very, very real.

And so are the places they frequent. Whole counties of countryside, whole boroughs of cityspace, are warped and twisted into grotesque parodies of their former selves, changed as if by some titanic, primal force. These places are called *Demonlands*. Few venture in, even fewer return to tell of their journeys—and then usually from the asylum.

What's happening? That is the central question in *Dark Conspiracy*, and answering it is the central quest of the game.

Dark Conspiracy uses the revised *Twilight: 2000* system, a tried and proven game system that works pretty well. As usual, this latest incarnation of the system has a few changes that might be useful to those refereeing *Twilight: 2000* or *Merc: 2000*, its supplement. One of the changes concerns the wound values; *Dark*

Conspiracy contains a rule about a minor wounding level (at 1/2 hit points, a character is "scratched" and suffers minor penalties). Another excellent addition is the flamethrower in the weapons section; for years, the ultimately militaristic *Twilight: 2000* ignored flamethrowers, as did *Traveller* and *Stalker* before it. This avoidance gave the impression that someone in GDW's rules writing team had a phobic aversion to flamethrowers... But that's solved now.

Twilight: 2000 players wishing to play *Dark Conspiracy* might want to generate new characters (although they can use their old ones if they wish), because the new character generation rules give half again as many skill levels per term. This is explained as being necessary for player-character survival... It's honestly tougher to survive against monster menaces than against armed deserters with tanks.

The reason? *Dark Conspiracy* adds the new dimension of psychic powers to the *Twilight: 2000* game system. Not fantasy magic by any means, these psychic powers are quite acceptable and do not upset the game system. And anyone who's ever heard anything about paranormal powers will recognize the listed abilities, ranging from simple telekinetic tricks to mind alteration and thought projection. The few psychic skills are so flexible that they cover a huge variety of paranormal activity. Monsters (or Dark Minions, as they're called in the book) have psychic powers. Humans can too, but very few humans are born attuned to the psychic, and attaining the powers at a level equal to the monsters is difficult.

One note not made clear in the book: Psychic illusion powers only work on living minds. A psychic illusion can fool a person, whether that person is looking at it with the naked eye or through a vision device, such as a camera or infrared scope. That is, if the psychic projecting the illusion knows the person's watching them. Security cameras, sending their signals to distant watchers, aren't the least bit fooled—they see the projector as what it really is. Robots aren't fooled



Dark Conspiracy art copy. 1991 GDW, Inc.



either.

In play, the monsters use their psychic powers to conceal themselves and frighten away the humans. Human psychics can use their powers to find the monsters and pierce the mental veil protecting the unnatural creatures. Once the monsters are revealed in their true guises, they die pretty easily.

More easily than the player-characters. The *Twilight: 2000* system has been enthralled by high firepower since its inception, and its designers worked matters so that PCs can survive the high-death environment. *Dark Conspiracy*, tied to this system, differs from other horror games in this regard. Characters die pretty easily in, say, *Call of Cthulhu*, but in *Dark Conspiracy* an average PC can absorb a full M-16 burst to the torso and not only be alive but still moving pretty well! Tough or strong PCs take a burst from a medium machinegun before they realize they've been hurt. Meanwhile, a grizzly bear goes down from just a little less damage.

Of course, this is made a little better by the quick kill rule, where an aimed shot to the head or torso can kill with a single shot. But the unrealistically high amounts of damage needed to injure a PC detract from the horror. After all, how horrible can this beastie be if it can't do much more than "scratch" a character?

Which brings up a central problem of the *Twilight: 2000* system. Only firearms are allowed to use the quick kill rule. Melee weapons are excluded from using this rule, and their damage is so small that it takes all day to kill a man using an axe or a chainsaw. Wouldn't Jason be surprised... And very few of the monsters use firearms, so

they're out of luck, because the PCs have no compunctions about using the biggest guns they can buy (including the .50 M2HB—just don't take it into a patrolled area). An axe does less damage than an M-16, and a grizzly bear's titanic punch only does equal damage. And forget unarmed combat altogether; if a bear can't KO a character, what chance does a mere human have? The *Twilight: 2000* rules concerning non-firearm combat are in need of serious revision.

Like *Traveller*, the *Twilight: 2000* character generation rules could use one serious area of revision. GDW designers seem to be enamored of the idea that the older you are, the more skilled you are. Therefore, every game they've made is populated by antique PCs. *Dark Conspiracy* gives more skill levels per four-year term than any GDW game to date, but the PCs still usually end up relics if they want decent skills. This ignores the fact that blood cools with age; older people are less likely to go out and put themselves into danger if they can help it. Something having to do with the wisdom of experience... GDW should seriously look into revising their rules to allow younger player-characters to acquire enough skill to survive. Somehow, young soldiers seem to have done acceptable throughout the ages.

Half the book is consumed presenting the rules to run the game. *Dark Conspiracy* is a complete game, unlike the *Twilight: 2000* supplement *Merc: 2000* or the incomplete *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs*. The other half of the book is used to outline the world and the Darkling monsters that are invading it.

Once you plow through the rules and reach the background information, it's pretty interesting

reading. Lester Smith does a fair job of explaining how the Darklings appeared, why they're there, and what they're doing. In addition, the section on alien Darkling technology is fascinatingly weird—the alien computers are wonderful, and really disgusting. *Dark Conspiracy* explains monsters as well as any other horror game I've seen, and does a much better job of it than some horror games. Les not only outlines the monsters, but gives good advice on how to referee horror. Heavy firepower may be imposing, but properly handled uncertainty is a great equalizer.

The adventure material deserves special mention. The central adventure, "Ravens Wolves," is a good beginning adventure, but the

REVIEW IN BRIEF

DARK CONSPIRACY=2.2

Game Complexity: Moderate

RULES=2.13

Clarity=3 Realism=2
Flexibility=1.5 Playability=2

DEVELOPMENT=2

Background=2
Technology=1.5 Scenarios=2.5

PRODUCTION=2.5

Cover Art=3 Interior Art=2.5
Layout=2.5 Editing=3
Charts=2 Record Forms=2

adventure suggestions are a comedy riot, and make for good adventures to boot. Les has gone to the tabloids and lifted actual tabloid headlines of weird occurrences and strange events that intrigue the imagination. After all, there are plenty of tabloid stories that would make great adventures as long as the referee can make up a way to explain how they could really happen! And they're a weekly source of ideas.

Les has promised supplements, with more monsters—one of the great strengths of this game is its monster flexibility, since any sci-fi monster can be "plugged in" and fit, according to the background (fans of bad sci-fi movies rejoice)—and more background locations and, hopefully, technology. One of the things I was disappointed to find was the lack of stuff available to be bought. Not that the electronics section was lacking—how many people will get the joke about the "Radio Shack MST 3000 Motion Detector"? Who made it, Joel or the Evil Scientists? There are no costs for housing, food, or clothing, the essentials of life. How can characters maintain a lifestyle without knowing how much it's going to cost?

And what do the characters do? They have jobs and occupations while they're being generated, but those jobs don't pay anything after generation. What are the characters supposed to do, become full-time monster hunters? Not much money in that occupation.

And how does a referee convert costs from *Twilight: 2000* equipment to *Dark Conspiracy*? There is a lot of equipment available from the former that would work nicely in the latter.

Hopefully, these questions and others (such as where's all that high-tech, state-of-the-art military equipment that forms a large part of U.S. exports? What do real militaries use? Surely not old 20th century equipment) will be answered in future supplements and expansions. It would have been nice to have had these questions dealt with in the massive rulebook, but there wasn't space to include complete background and complete rules in the same volume. The *Dark Conspiracy* book pretty much stretches the limits of how large a perfect-bound book can get.

Dark Conspiracy is a good beginning. It's bloody enough to satisfy the weapon freaks that play *Twilight: 2000*, and spooky enough to baffle the mystery fans. It needs help, due to the fact that it's the first GDW game since *Traveller* to deal with problems of day-to-day existence—after all, *Dark Conspiracy* characters can have lives outside monster-hunting—and these simple but voluminous details seem to have been ignored. With a couple of supplements, *Dark Conspiracy* can be truly complete. As it stands, a good referee can start a campaign and incorporate other details as they appear.

—Craig Sheeley

Millenium's End

144 page perfect-bound book. \$14.95

Game Design: Charles Ryan. *Cover and Interior Art:* Charles Ryan.

Publisher: Chameleon Eclectic Entertainment, PO Box 1332, Centreville VA 22020-1332.

Background

Millenium's End is a game set in the near future, a slightly dark future, that includes a limited nuclear war in the Middle East during 1991 as well as increased drug smuggling, increased terrorism, global political unrest, and global warming. The current year is 1999.

Layout

Millenium's End is broken into four main parts: The Character, The Game, Combat, and The Campaign. "The Character" covers creating your characters and purchasing equipment. "The Game" includes using skills and attributes, skill descriptions, character improvement, and using vehicles and computers. "Combat," of course, covers combat of all types and damage, as well as healing. "The Campaign" details the near-future history, technology, and running adventures. Also included are a two page index, seven pages of charts, a blank record sheet for photocopying, and two clear Attack Overlay Sheets for determining combat results. There are 38 pieces of artwork, some of which are cropped illustrations from other pieces in the book.

Game Mechanics

Creating a character is pretty straight forward. You start by dividing 25 points among ten attributes. Each attribute must have at least one point and can have as many as four. At this point, you roll one D10 for each point in each attribute and add them together.

To develop your skills, you have two types of points: Background Points for skills learned in school, and Education Points for skills gained in colleges and trade schools. Some skills can be purchased using either kind of points, but others are specific to either Background or Education.

Skills are broken down into different categories such as Academic, Creative, Reflexive, Physical, etc. A Bonus is given based on the appropriate attribute. When Basic Skills are developed, Subskills are developed further. Basic Skills can only be developed up to 55 at the start and Subskills can only be developed up to half of the appropriate Basic Skill. To determine the target number you have to roll under for success, you add the General Skill Bonus, the Basic Skill level, and the Subskill level.

Combat resolution is a bit different than what I have seen elsewhere. The attacker states the target point on his/her opponent, the referee lays the clear overlay with its center point over the target point on an appropriately posed drawing of a figure provided in the book and the player rolls percentile dice. If the player rolls over the required number, it is an obvious miss. If the player rolls under the number, the referee checks to see how close the roll was to the required number and matches that to the clear overlay. The player may or may not actually hit the exact target point (or even hit the target at all) by rolling under the required number.





Millenium's End art copy. 1991 Chameleon Eclectic Entertainment

Skill use is resolved by rolling a number on percentile dice that is less than the skill level total. The referee factors in any modifiers and if the player rolls well enough, he/she succeeds in using the skill.

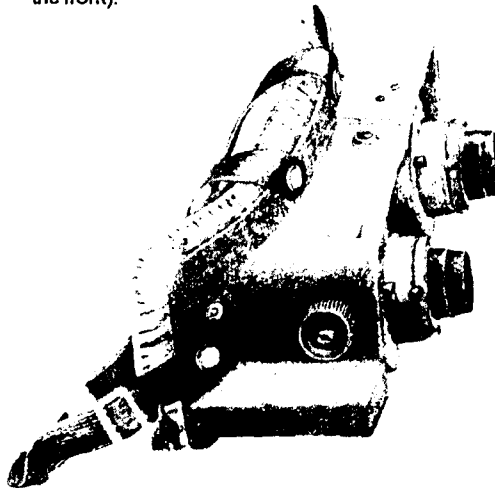
What I Liked

There are several things I like about this game. There is a two page Table of Contents and a two page Index. There are plenty of skills listed to choose from, and I like the way they are broken down with attributes determining a Talent Base modifier, a Skill and then a Subskill listed

underneath the Skill. The way the skill points are arrived at is as logical as anything I've seen, although some people might need a calculator to do the job right. The treatment used for car chases and ordinary driving is unusually detailed as well. And I like the idea of the clear overlays used for determining success in combat—it's a unique and interesting touch. One other thing I really liked: the sample adventure. Here, you find an adventure presented in the form of a story, with sidebars giving needed game information such as PC and NPC stats and maps. Also well done is the example Clue Tree Flow Chart showing the important events in the adventure, how they are connected, and what clues can be learned from each event. Referees running mystery and adventure campaigns can pick up some good ideas for connecting and relating clues needed in a game by looking at the sample adventure and the Clue Tree.

What I Didn't Like

There are a couple of things I didn't like. First of all, the artwork is mostly average to mediocre. The people in the artwork look awkward, like something is wrong but you can't quite tell what it is. Second, the record sheet has so much material crammed onto it that it is difficult to find some things and there is little space available for things I feel are important. More space should be provided for additional Subskills that players might want to learn. And four short lines is not enough for notes on character background. A better arrangement would have been to use both sides of the page (putting history and background on the back and leaving more space for skills on the front).



REVIEW IN BRIEF

MILLENIUM'S END=3.0

Game Complexity: Low

RULES=3.0

Clarity=3.0 Realism=3.0
Flexibility=3.2 Playability=3.0

DEVELOPMENT=3.2

Background=3.2
Technology=3.5 Scenarios=3.0

PRODUCTION=2.8

Cover Art=3.0 Interior Art=2.0
Layout=3.0 Editing=3.0
Charts=3.0 Record Forms=3.0

So...What About The Game?

I think that Millenium's End is a reasonable buy. In spite of the not-so-great artwork and the minor problem of the crowded record sheet, I like it. If you are looking for an RPG dealing with modern and near-future roleplaying without magic and a ton of cyberware, *Millenium's End* would be a good one to look at. Referees using another game system can use this game as a good source of ideas and background material. Several products are planned for release in the near future: a package of two adventures, a sourcebook for Black Eagle/Black Eagle company operations, and a software package for the MAC that rolls dice, helps speed up character generation, resolves combat and keeps PC and NPC records up-to-date.

— Glen Allison

Afterwars

128 page perfect-bound book. \$14.95.

Written By: Timothy McFadden *Game Design:* L. Lee Cerny, Walter H. Mytczynskyj. *Cover Artist:* Pamela Shanteau. *Interior Artists:* L. Lee Cerny, Bradley K. McDevitt, Rob Prior, David Zenz.

Publisher: Stellar Games, Box 156, Swanton OH 43558

Background

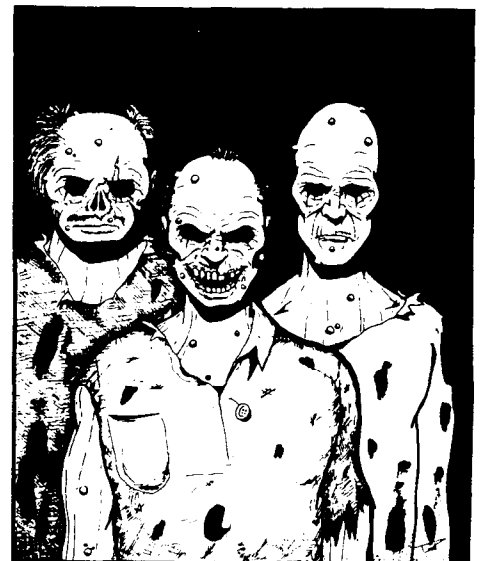
The *Afterwars* history diverges from ours starting in 1984 when Mikhail Gorbachev is appointed supervisor of the Hydroelectric Works in remote Uzbekistan. Things get worse from that point on. After this, history is recorded in months and days before the current game day, leaving the referee to decide the dates upon which all of these events took place. Not to give away any big surprises, but sixteen months and two weeks ago, a massive nuclear launch and retaliation took place killing about 2.5 billion people worldwide. Immediately, "nuclear winter" became reality. Currently, the death toll has exceeded four billion and all governments have collapsed.

Layout

Afterwars is divided into three separate parts: Character Generation and Background Information, Game Master Information, and Equipment Listings (also including all the tables and reference charts at the back). There is a three page Table of Contents and fifteen pages of various charts as well as a blank record sheet at the back of the book. There are 35 pieces of art as well as numerous drawings and pictures of military equipment taken from NOVA Cube in Newark, Delaware.

Game Mechanics

Afterwars requires the use of ten-sided dice. When creating a character, you could use as many as 6D10 at one time. There are eight attributes ranging from Strength and Fitness to Will and Luck. To create your character, you roll 4D10 for each attribute, then choose a character



Afterwars art copy. 1991 Stellar Games



class. These classes determine which types of skills (Survival, Hobby, Military, or Degree) are available to you and how good you can be with these skills at the start of the game. For example, "Mainstreamers" get three summing (adding) rolls in Degree skills, six summing rolls in Hobby skills, two summing rolls in Survival skills, and four summing rolls in Military skills. That means that skills in each skill type get a number of D10 to roll for your starting bonus for that skill. For example, each Hobby skill you pick gets 4D10 that you roll and add together. So, each time you pick Basketweaving as a Hobby, you roll 4D10 and add them. You can pick a skill more than once (up to the limit of your character class) to get better in that skill.

Skill use is done using percentile dice. Success is determined by rolling equal to or under the bonus for that particular skill. The attribute Luck can also be used as a skill (Luck/5 rounded off and can be no greater than 20). Combat is resolved the same was as other skills.

What I Liked

I liked the variety of different possible encounters, the descriptions of them were good. The list of skills was complete enough to do the job and enough equipment was listed to satisfy

most collectors. I liked the possibility of psionics in PCs. And there are a couple of interesting possibilities for the referee to add some surprises to the usual "post-holocaust" scenarios.

What I Didn't Like

Well, what can I say? Here's another post-holocaust RPG. I have always felt that most post-holocaust scenarios get rather boring after a while. Perhaps this game system will not fall into that trap. Perhaps it will. There are no sample adventures and no scenario ideas to be found here, either. I don't really care one way or the other. Also, the record sheet is rather boring with a list of Skills and Attributes on one side and a strange arrangement of boxes for Background, Equipment, and a grid for keeping track of weapons and ammo. There is nothing really wrong with *Afterwars* but for some reason, I can't seem to get excited about it.

So...What About The Game?

I would not recommend this game to many people. There are several similar games already on the market that are better. For referees, this RPG might be useful for additional background information. The section on Wanderers, Creatures, and Random Encounters would be useful here (but that's only seven pages). On the other hand, if someone were looking for a fairly simple game system with a little bit of background material dealing with a post-holocaust scenario, this one might do. But the referee would have to do quite a bit of work to get it going since there are no adventures or other supplements available. If you have some extra cash floating around and you want to try it out, go ahead. But you'll probably get tired of it after you've faced your six-thousandth Mutant Scav or five-hundredth Crazy Survivalist.

—Glen Allison

A Gathering Evil

The First Dark Conspiracy Novel. \$4.95.

By: Michael A. Stackpole. Cover Artist: Dell Harris

Publisher: GDW, PO Box 1646, Bloomington IL 61702-1646

A Gathering Evil is the first novel published for *Dark Conspiracy*, GDW's new roleplaying game of horror in a very near future.

After reading through the RPG rulebook, I rather felt that the world situation was a little contrived, at least where the horror elements were concerned. All kinds of monsters, called Dark Minions, lurk and prey among us, yet people don't know or don't believe they're there. But the novel showed these minions among us to be much more subtle—but still quite deadly—in the pursuit of their dark ambitions, and of far fewer numbers than I believed there were after reading the RPG.

After a rough-and-tumble beginning, the story seemed a little slow in places in its progression to the meat of a gathering evil—not that it wasn't entertaining to read. Stackpole's writing style is very witty and fun to read, with one quip after another: "We're a pair. I'm dressed to stun, and you're dressed to kill." Though some readers might tire of the clever phrasing, I did not. (Stackpole's witty style used in his *Shadowrun* stories is what, more than anything, endeared me to him as an author.)

Novels written to take place in the fictional backgrounds of RPGs are a great idea, as they serve to provide substance for a background and suggest and create the atmosphere of a game world, something which is usually more difficult to do effectively in an RPG rule book. **A Gathering Evil** does an admirable job of this and, for myself, I'm looking forward to reading more novels—hopefully by Michael Stackpole—to follow-up this one. Until then, "You know what they say, 'Praise God, but pass the ammunition'."

—James B. King

REVIEW IN BRIEF

AFTERWARS=2.9

Game Complexity: Low-Medium

RULES=3.0

Clarity=3.0

Realism=3.0

Flexibility=2.8

Playability=3.0

DEVELOPMENT=2.8

Background=2.8

Technology=2.8

Scenarios=N/A

PRODUCTION=3.0

Cover Art=3.0

Interior Art=3.0

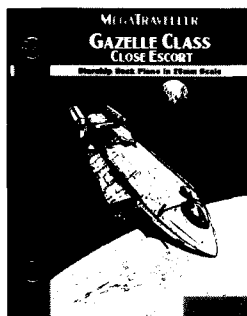
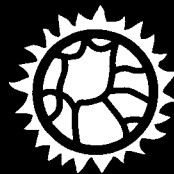
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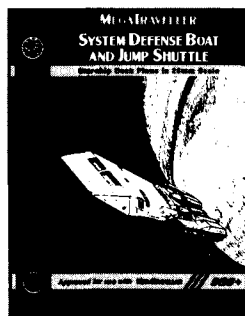
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Record Forms=2.8

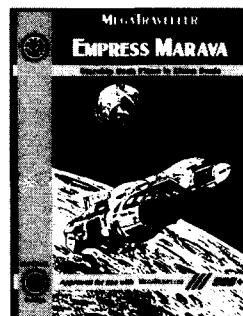
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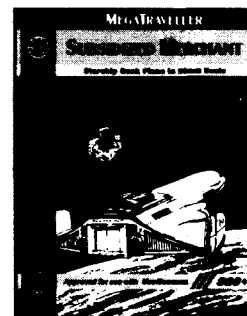
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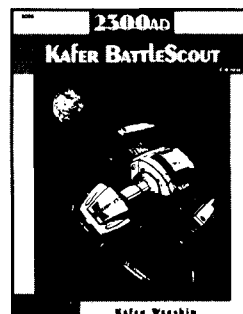
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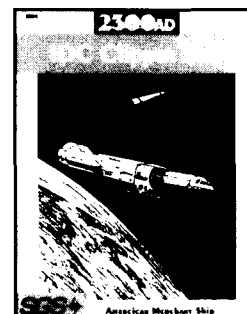
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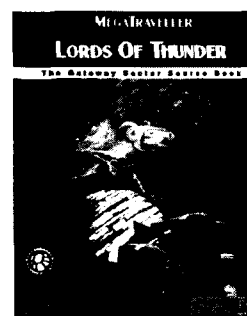
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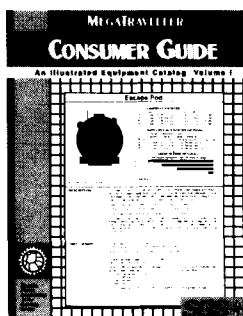
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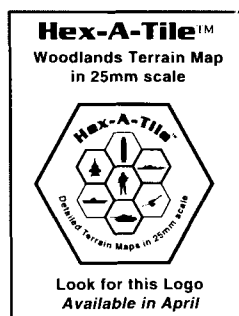


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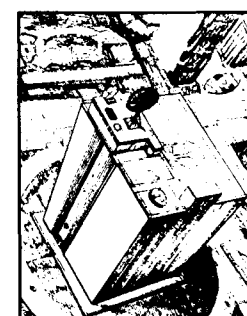


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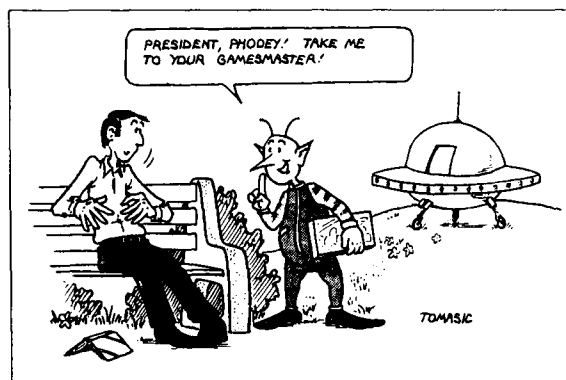
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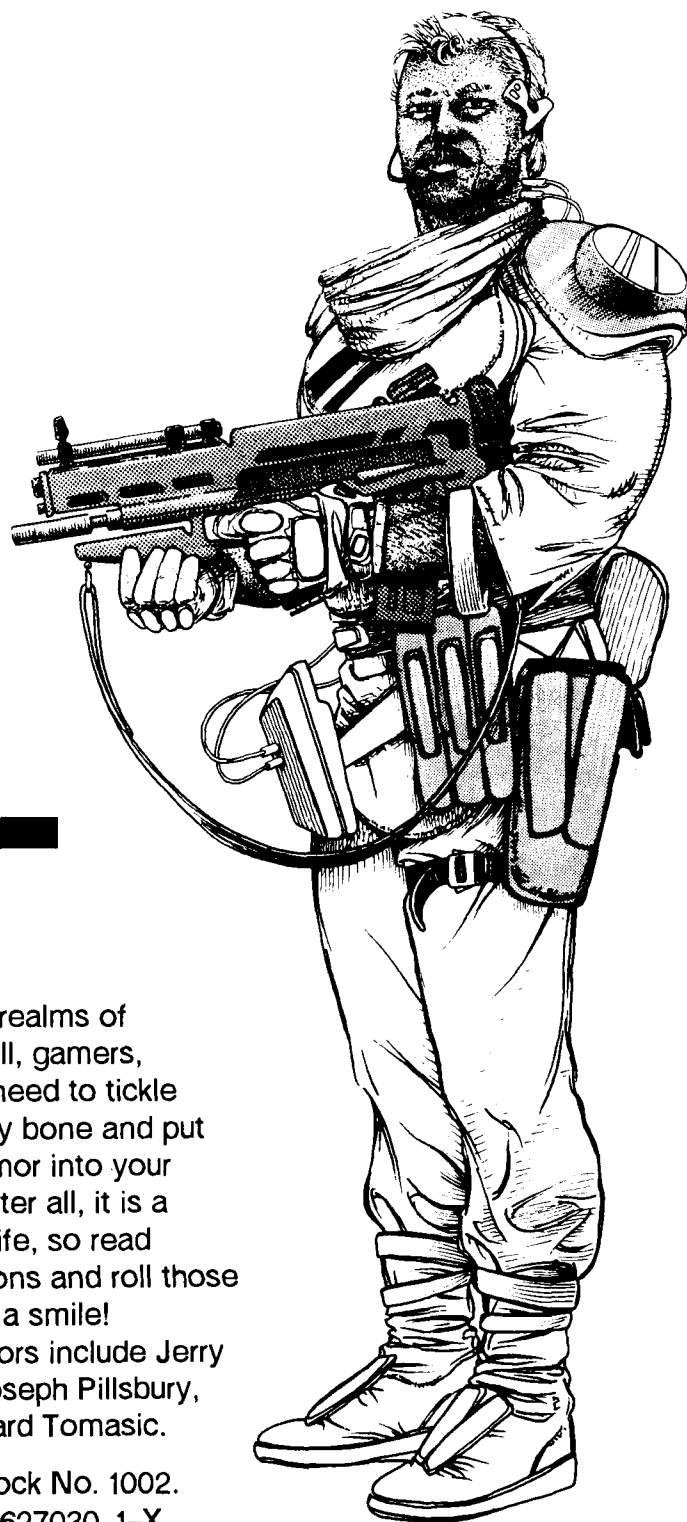
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